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*The Quranic Commentaries  
of Mullā Ṣadrā*  
Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Toshihiko Izutsu, to whom this essay is dedicated, was at once a major scholar of the Noble Quran and of Islamic philosophy and nowhere do these two domains meet in a more perfect fashion than in the Quranic commentaries of Mullā Ṣadrā.<sup>1</sup> Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī known also as Mullā Ṣadrā has become fairly well known during the past two or three decades in the West and more and more studies are being devoted to his vast intellectual synthesis known as *al-ḥikmat al-muta'āliyah* (literally "Transcendent Theosophy").<sup>2</sup> But as yet little attention has been paid to his Quranic commentaries which are of great significance from the point of view of both the history of Quranic commentary and Islamic philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Without doubt these commentaries are the most important by an Islamic philosopher or theosopher (*ḥakīm*) and also the most voluminous by a representative of the Islamic philosophical tradition until the present century when a follower of the school of Mullā Ṣadrā, 'Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'i (d. 1983), wrote his monumental *Tafsīr al-mizān*.

Even in Persia, the home of Mullā Ṣadrā and his school, until the past fifteen years most attention to his works were concentrated upon his properly speaking philosophical works such as the *Asfār* and *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah* and the Quranic commentaries did not

receive as much attention as the philosophical texts on even Mullā Ṣadrā's commentary upon the *Uṣūl al-kāfi* of Kulaynī. Since 1980, however, thanks most of all to the indefatigable efforts of Muḥammad Khwājawī, the different commentaries, all in Arabic, have been published in new editions usually with Persian translations both as separate volumes and together in a collected work which the editor has entitled *Tafsīr al-qur'ān al-karīm*.<sup>4</sup>

In the same way that Mullā Ṣadrā's "Transcendent Theosophy" marks the synthesis of the various schools of gnosis, theosophy, philosophy and theology within a Shi'ite intellectual climate, his Quranic commentaries mark the meeting point of four different traditions of Quranic commentary before him, the Sufi, the Shi'ite, the theological and the philosophical.<sup>5</sup> Both Sufi and Shi'ite commentaries trace their origin to the commentaries of Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, which in turn go back to 'Alī about whom Ibn 'Abbās was to say, "What I took from the interpretation of the Quran is from 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib."<sup>6</sup> The 3rd/9th century Egyptian Sufi Dhu' l-Nūn al-Miṣrī made an edition of Imām Ja'far's *tafsīr* and was the spiritual predecessor of Sahl al-Tustarī, the author of the oldest extant continuous Sufi commentary upon the Quran.<sup>7</sup> The same *tafsīr* was given a new recension by Ibn 'Aṭā', a recension that was later incorporated by Sulamī in the 4th/10th century in his *Ḥaqā'iq al-tafsīr*, the second oldest Sufi Quranic commentary after Tustarī's.

From this early tradition there flowed the major Sufi commentaries of later centuries such as the *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt* of Imām Abu'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī and the commentary of Khwājah 'Abdallāh Anṣārī in the 5th/11th century. The latter was completed and much expanded in the monumental Sufi commentary of Anṣārī's student, Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, which is one of the masterpieces of the Persian language. The next two centuries were witness to the continuous flowering of this tradition with the appearance of the two colossal figures of Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī and Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī, whose *'Arā'is al-bayān* brings this early chapter of Sufi Quranic commentary to its culmination and close.

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generation after Baqlī by Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī who left a most profound mark upon all later esoteric commentaries and particularly on those of Mullā Şadrā. The *Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah* of Ibn ‘Arabī is in so many ways a Quranic commentary and brings out over and over again some of the most profound meanings of the verses of the Sacred Book.<sup>8</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī is also the author of a monumental commentary that is as yet unpublished while the well-known commentary, *Ta’wīl al-qur’ān*, attributed to him, belongs to the 8th/14th century follower of his school, ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī. In any case this long Sufi tradition of *tafsīr* and *ta’wīl* was well known to Mullā Şadrā and constitutes one of the four traditions of Quranic commentary which became wed together in his own works on the subject.

The second tradition, namely the Shi‘ite, also begins with the work of Imām Ja‘far al-Şādiq and included not only more formal and “external” commentaries such as *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-qur’ān* of Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī and *Majma‘al-bayān fī tafsīr al-qur’ān* of Abū ‘Alī al-Faḍl al-Ṭabarsī, but also works of Shi‘ite gnostics such as the 8th/14th century figure Ḥaydar Āmulī and his successor in the 9th/15th century Şā‘in al-Dīn ibn Turkah Işfahānī. Again Mullā Şadrā may be said to stand directly within this tradition with which he was very familiar, being himself a Shi‘ite gnostic and philosopher of the highest order. This tradition is also to be seen in the works of some of Mullā Şadrā’s contemporaries and students such as Sayyid Aḥmad ‘Alawī and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī.

As far as theological commentaries, by which we mean commentaries associated with the schools of *Kalām*, are concerned, it is necessary to state that Mullā Şadrā was in general opposed to *Kalām* as such and believed that the *mutakallimūn* had no right to deal with the subjects with which they were for the most part engaged, and that these subjects, having to do with God, His Names and Attributes, the human soul, etc., should be treated by the “theosophers” (*ḥukamā-yi ilāhī*) who had access to divine inspiration as well as reason and the external form of the revelation. Nevertheless, Mullā Şadrā was closely familiar with *Kalām* especially the works of Ghazzālī and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī among the Ash‘arites and the *Tajrīd* of Naşīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī in Shi‘ite *Kalām*. As far as Quranic commentaries from

the perspective of *Kalām* are concerned, however, it is especially the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī that must be mentioned. Like nearly all later Quranic commentators, Sunni and Shi'ite alike, Mullā Ṣadrā knew of this immense commentary and most likely had studied at least parts of it.<sup>9</sup> One can see also traces of Ghazzālī's methodology of commentary upon the Quran in Mullā Ṣadrā, this influence being predominantly from the Sufism of Ghazzālī but also to some extent from the aspect of the thought of Ghazzālī as an Ash'arite.

Finally, a word must be said about philosophical commentaries upon the Quran by which we mean commentaries written by those technically called *faylasūf* or *ḥakīm*. Already in al-Fārābī there is some concern with Quranic commentary especially if we accept the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikmah* as being by him. But the founder of philosophical commentary in the Islamic intellectual tradition is Ibn Sīnā who not only wrote separate commentaries upon verses of the Quran, but also provided a famous commentary upon the "Light Verse" in his *al-Ishārāt w'l-tanbihāt* which influenced even Ghazzālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār* despite the latter's opposition to Avicennan philosophy. Strangely enough, however, this corpus has not been taken as seriously as it should in most of the studies on Ibn Sīnā in the West, and even in most of the contemporary Islamic scholarship on the subject.<sup>10</sup>

After Ibn Sīnā, it was especially Suhrawardī who turned to the Quran in his exposition of *ishrāqī* doctrine. In contrast to Ibn Sīnā, however, Suhrawardī did not write separate Quranic commentaries, but his works are replete with Quranic quotations upon which he comments amidst his exposition of various philosophical and theological theses in contrast to Ibn Sīnā who did not quote the Quran directly in such major works as the *Shifā'* and *Najāh*.

Mullā Ṣadrā's commentaries may be said to be a synthesis of all these four schools of Quranic commentary with which he had various degrees of familiarity and the situation of his commentaries in the context of the history of Quranic commentary cannot be understood except in the context of these schools. Of course Mullā Ṣadrā was also acquainted with the standard commentaries common among Muslim scholars such as those of Bayḍāwī, Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī and Abu'l-Futūḥ al-Rāzī. But one should not think for one moment that

Mullā Ṣadrā's commentaries draw elements from these commentaries of particular traditions of Quranic commentary, namely, the Sufī, the Shi'ite, and more than the *ḥikmat al-ash'arīyah* of the schools which produced the commentaries Mullā Ṣadrā studied to him by inspiration from the Sufis. It is possible to understand the process of unveiling (*kashf*) which occurs in the Quranic commentaries upon the realities of the Divine Reality from

The Quranic commentaries

1. Commentary upon chapters 1-11, introduction, twenty nine pages.
2. Commentary upon chapters 12-20, one of his longest and most detailed, an introduction and twenty nine pages.
3. Commentary upon chapters 21-29, Consisting of an introduction, a conclusion, this work is the longest in the long tradition of commentaries upon the major works of Islamic philosophy.
4. Commentary upon chapters 30-39, consisting of an introduction, a conclusion.
5. Commentary upon chapters 40-49, (including the opening), consisting of five volumes, beginning with *bismi'Llāh* with which the work is discussed.
6. Commentary upon chapters 50-59, completed only up to volume 5, consisting of the theses of the Ash'arites.
7. Commentary upon chapters 60-69, eight principles to provide a

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Mullā Ṣadrā's commentaries are simply an eclectic gathering of elements from these commonly known commentaries and the four particular traditions of Quranic commentary mentioned above, namely, the Sufi, the Shi'ite, the theological and the philosophical, any more than the *ḥikmat al-muta'āliyah* is simply the sum of the teachings of the schools which preceded it. In many of his Quranic commentaries Mullā Ṣadrā states that this or that meaning was unveiled to him by inspiration from the Divine Throne and that no one will be able to understand the inner meaning of the Quran without that unveiling (*kashf*) which enables the "eye of the heart" to gaze directly upon the realities of the spiritual world and even beyond them to the Divine Reality from which the Quran has descended.

The Quranic commentaries of Mullā Ṣadrā are as follows:<sup>11</sup>

1. Commentary upon chapter LVII, *al-Ḥadīd* (Iron), with one introduction, twenty nine parts<sup>12</sup> and a conclusion.
2. Commentary upon the "Throne Verse" (*āyat al-kursī*), (II; 255), one of his longest and most important commentaries consisting of an introduction and twenty chapters.
3. Commentary upon the "Light Verse" (*āyat al-nūr*), (XXIV; 35). Consisting of an introduction, a prolegomena, five chapters and a conclusion, this work is in a sense the synthesis and peak of the long tradition of commentaries upon this verse and is one of the major works of Islamic metaphysics.
4. Commentary upon chapter XXXII, *al-Sajdah* (The Prostration), consisting of an introduction, a prolegomena, nine parts and a conclusion.
5. Commentary upon chapter I, *al-Ḥamd* or *al-Fātiḥah* (The Opening), consisting of five parts in which the various meanings of *bismi'llāh* with which the chapters of the Quran begin are discussed.
6. Commentary upon chapter II, *al-Baqarah* (The Cow), which was completed only up to verse sixty-six and in which he refutes many of the theses of the Ash'arites and Mu'tazilites.
7. Commentary upon chapter XXXVI, *Ya-Sin* (Y-S), consisting of eight principles to prove bodily resurrection followed by sixteen

chapters.

8. Commentary upon chapter LXII, *al-Jum'ah* (The Congregation), consisting of an introduction, twelve parts and several "inspirations from the Divine Throne" (*al-ḥikmat al-'arshiyah*), a gnostic affirmation and a conclusion.
9. Commentary upon chapter LV, *al-Wāqi'ah* (The Event), consisting of an introduction followed by the text, the introduction containing autobiographical material about his journey from the outward to the inward.
10. Commentary upon chapter LXXXVI, *al-Ṭāriq* (The Morning Star), consisted of an introduction and the text in which he states that there are great secrets hidden in this chapter unveiled to him by God.
11. Commentary upon chapter LXXXVII, *al-A'lā* (The Most High), with an introduction and seven chapters.
12. Commentary upon chapter XCIX *al-Zilzāl* (The Earthquake), with an introduction and the text.

In addition to these commentaries there are three works of Mullā Ṣadrā which are directly related to the subject at hand. The first and by far the most important is *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* which is one of Mullā Ṣadrā's most important works ranking with the *Asfār*, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah* and *Sharḥ usūl al-kāfi*. In it he speaks of his method in the interpretation of the Quran (especially in the first two chapters, that is, *al-miftāḥ al-awwal* and *al-miftāḥ al-thānī*). Secondly there is the *Mutashābihāt al-qur'ān* which summarizes the discussion of the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* as far as the "ambiguous" verses of the Quran are concerned. Finally there is *Asrār al-āyāt* which contains a section on the esoteric meaning of the abbreviated letters at the beginning of certain chapters of the Quran.

It must not be thought, however, that these fifteen works taken together contain all of Mullā Ṣadrā's Quranic commentaries. To include all of his commentaries one must also include the many verse quoted and commented upon in such philosophical works as the *Asfār*, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah al-Mashā'ir*, *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād*, *al-Ḥikmat al-'arshiyah*, etc. As we have occasion to remark before,<sup>13</sup>

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although Mullā Ṣadrā's works can be categorized into those dealing with the intellectual sciences (*al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah*) and those dealing with the transmitted sciences (*al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah*), this categorization is not based on mutual exclusion. The predominantly 'aqli works still possess naqli elements and viceversa. Therefore, in a sense the whole corpus of Mullā Ṣadrā is related to Quranic commentary while all of his Quranic commentaries are replete with philosophical and theosophical discussion. The works cited above, however, constitute his Quranic commentaries in a more exclusive sense and should be studied precisely as Quranic commentary. In fact together they constitute one of the major intellectual and gnostic commentaries upon Quran in Islamic history.

The method of Mullā Ṣadrā in his Quranic commentaries is based on the avoidance of both pitfalls of remaining bound only by the outer meaning of the Sacred Text and of neglecting or negating the outward and formal meaning altogether. While at the beginning of his commentary, upon *Sūrat al-sajdah*, he expresses his opposition to those satisfied only with the external meaning of the Text, in his commentary upon *Āyat al-nūr* he criticizes those who, in the name of carrying out *ta'wīl*,<sup>14</sup> pay no attention to the external meaning of Quranic terms as those words are understood in ordinary language. He even goes so far as to claim that such interpreters and commentators (*mu'awwilūn*) are more dangerous than those who limit the Quran simply to its outward meaning.<sup>15</sup>

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, authentic Quranic commentary is possible only for those whom the Quran calls "firm in knowledge" (*al-rāsikhūn fi'l-'ilm*). Even among this exalted group of people of knowledge, there is a hierarchy and levels of understanding, some being able to reach more inner meanings of the text than others. But even the highest among those "firm in knowledge" cannot gain access to the whole meaning of the Quran. The highest and profoundest meaning of the Sacred Text is known to God alone. On all levels, moreover, what those "firm in knowledge" utter about the meaning of the Text is not opposed to the outward meaning (*al-zāhir*) but complements it. To reach the inner meaning is not to oppose the outward

sense.

Authentic Quranic commentaries must rely on two basic sources: clear transmission of the text of the Quran and vision of the truth which is so evident as not to be open to doubt or refutation. This latter source he identifies with unveiling (*mukāshafah*) and knowledge received by the heart (*al-wāridāt al-qalbiyyah*), terms which are used often by Mullā Ṣadrā to refer to knowledge received through intellection and illumination. To gain full access to this latter source, the commentator must undergo ascetic practices and self-purification. Otherwise he is simply fooling himself. Despite being an outstanding speculative philosopher, Mullā Ṣadrā insists that when it comes to the Quran, ordinary use of reason as understood by rationalistic philosophers is not sufficient. The heart must be purified and illuminated before the inner meaning of the Quran can be understood and transmitted. In his commentary upon the *āyat al-kursī* he goes so far as to say that he is addressing only the elite among the people of God (*ahl Allāh*), the lovers of God and those who believe in what the first two groups have attained. For those who display opposite characteristics, the reading of Mullā Ṣadrā's commentaries are even juridically forbidden (*ḥarām*).

An excellent example of Mullā Ṣadrā's method of Quranic commentary is to be found in his commentary upon the *āyat al-nūr* which demonstrates the depth of his metaphysical knowledge as well as knowledge of the earlier tradition of sapiential commentary in Islam. At the beginning in his discussion of the meaning of light (*al-nūr*) he writes:

"God is the light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is a niche wherein is (a lamp). . . ."

#### PREFACE

"The indication (*ishāra*) regarding the verification (*tahqīq*) of this verse is prefaced by (our saying) that the word "light" is not—as the veiled ones (*al-mahjūbūn*) from among the experts ('*ulamā'*) on language (*lisān*) and theology (*kalām*) understand it—a subject (*mawḍū'*) of the accident ('*araḍ*) which consists of bodies (*ajsām*). They have defined it as a thing which has no duration (*baqā'*) for two moments of time, belonging to created

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"Light, in its unqualified sense, bears many meanings in vulgar opinion, some of which are homonymous (*bi-al-ishtirāk*), some literal (*bi-al-ḥaqīqa*) and some figurative (*al-majāz*), such as: the light of reason, the light of faith, the light of piety, the light of sapphire, the light of gold, and the light of turquoise.

"In the opinion of the Illuminationists (*al-ishrāqiyīn*) and their followers such as Shaykh al-Maqtūl Shihāb al-Dīn (al-Suhrawardī)—the one who unveils their symbols (*rumūz*), extracts their treasures (*kunūz*), records their sciences, sheds light on their understandings (*fuhūm*), exposes their stations (*maqāmāt*), and explains their allusions (*ishārāt*)—(light) is a simple (*basīṭa*) and self-manifesting (*zāhira bi-dhātihā*) reality (*ḥaqīqa*), which brings other things to manifestation. Accordingly, (this reality) cannot possess genus (*jins*) or differentia (*faṣl*) because it is not constructed of parts, nor is it made known by definition (*ḥadd*), nor unveiled by description (*rasm*), for it is not hidden in itself, rather it is the most manifest (*azhar*) of things, since it is the opposite of darkness (*ḡulma*) and hiddenness (*khafā'*), (just as) negation (*salb*) is the opposite of affirmation (*ījāb*). Thus there is no demonstration (*burhān*) for it; rather it is the demonstration for everything.

"Hiddenness and veiling, however, occur (*yaṭra'ān*) to it only according to levels (*marātib*), such as (occurs in the case of) the level of self-subsisting (*qayyūmī*) light—because of its extreme manifestation (*ḡuhūr*) and apparentness (*burūz*). For (what is) intensely manifest and theophanized (*tajallī*) may cause what is manifested to become hidden due to the abundance of (light) and the extreme deficiency of the illuminated thing, just as one observes in the case of bats when strong visible sunlight shines in their pupils. If the situation is thus with regard to sensible light, what would you think about the light of intellect which reaches the peak of intensity and power?

"Light is interpreted by the elder (*akābir*) Sufis according to this meaning, as can be gleaned from their compilations and

symbolic tales (*marmūzāt*), although the difference between their school of thought (*madhhab*) and that of the illuminated sages is that light—although it is, according to those elders (Sufis), a simple reality—is exposed, in accordance with its essence (*dhāt*), to variations (*tafāwut*) in intensity and weakness (and exposed to) plurality (*ta'addud*) and multiplicity (*kathra*) in accordance with modes of being (*hay'āt*) and in individualities (*tashakkkhuṣāt*), (as well as exposed to) differences in necessity (*wājibiyya*) and contingency (*mumkiniyya*), substantiality (*jawhariyya*) and accidentality (*'araḍiyya*), independence (*al-ghinā*) and dependence (*al-iftiqār*).

“As for the opinion of the most erudite noble ones (the illuminated sages), these properties (*aḥkām*) do not occur to it with respect to the definition of its essence, but rather with respect to its theophanies (*tajalliyyāt*), entifications (*ta'ayyunāt*), traits (*shu'ūnāt*) and considerations (*i'tibārāt*). Thus truth is one, and plurality occurs only in accordance with different loci of manifestation (*mazāhir*), mirrors (*marā'i*) and receptacles (*qawābil*). It is not unlikely that the difference between the two schools of thought is attributable to their disparity in terminology and ways of alluding to things, their artistry in clarification and intimation and their ways of summarizing and detailing—despite their agreement as far as the foundations and principles are concerned. What Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī mentions in the *Mishkāṭ al-Anwār* when he says, “Light is an expression by which things are made visible,” is in accord with the statements of the Imāms of wisdom.”<sup>16</sup>

For Mullā Ṣadrā, as for other Islamic esoterists, in the deepest sense the Quran is being (*wujūd*) itself, and his major work on Quranic commentary the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, literally “Keys to the Invisible World” is a key to both the Quran and its complement the world of existence. As expressed by a leading contemporary Persian authority in his introduction to the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*:

“The Quran and being (*wujūd*) are parallel to each other for the Quran issues from the unique and total Name of God and because of its being the theophany of the total Name, reflects all the Divine Names. That is why the *Shari'ah* of the Quran is the seal of all *Shari'ahs* and the sanctity (*walāyah*) of the Quran is for the

same reason the seal

“Like the Quran which are the keys to the world, the words are made manifest from their composition in the chapters the evidence (gathering) and *fuṣūḥ* aspect of the evidence with the total of its aspect is the reality

“The lordly Name of the visible world and the mutable and unique as well as in one's child most notable of the and his inerrant father

Shāhrūdī goes on to show the cosmic existence as reflected in the letters and verses of the Quran and the key to both of the Names which was possessed by those who are “firm in

In fact the very name of the work which is the key he was seeking “to probe the invisible dimensions of the world for many other gnostics in harmony with being, for the Principle of reality and the means which unveil the an opening toward the invisible aspect of the Quran of being and viceversa.”

In the *Asfār*, his major works, Mullā Ṣadrā has been from time to time to Quranic commentaries,

same reason the seal of divine sanctity.<sup>17</sup>

“Like the Quran, being (*wujūd*) possesses letters (*ḥurūf*) which are the keys to the invisible world. From their composition words are made and from their composition verses (*āyāt*)<sup>18</sup> and from their composition chapters. Finally from the (gathering of) chapters the evident book of being with its two aspects of *qur’ān* (gathering) and *furqān* (discernment) is realized. The *furqānī* aspect of the evident book (*kitāb-i mubīn*) is the macrocosm with the total of its details. Its *qur’ānī* and collected (gathered) aspect is the reality of the lordly universal man.

“The lordly Names (*asmā’-i rubūbī*) are the keys to the invisible world and the universal principles of being. And the immutable and unique theophany run through all the great stars as well as in one’s children. The science of the Divine Names is the most notable of the sciences and the knowledge of the Prophet and his inerrant family is such a science. . . .”<sup>19</sup>

Shāhrūdī goes on to show the close correspondence between macrocosmic existence as reflecting various Divine Names and the chapters and verses of the Quran which are also reflection of God’s Names and the key to both of these realities through the science of the Names which was possessed by the Prophet and later transmitted to those who are “firm in knowledge.”

In fact the very name *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* was chosen by Mullā Ṣadrā for the work which is the key to his Quranic commentaries because he was seeking “to provide means to gain access to the inner and invisible dimensions of being and of the Quran. For Mullā Ṣadrā, as for many other gnostics and philosophers, the Quran is in complete harmony with being, for it has issued from the Source of being, the Principle of reality and the core of the archetypal world. Therefore, the means which unveil the inner meaning of the Quran also provide an opening toward the inner meaning of being. The key to the invisible aspect of the Quran is also a key to the invisible dimensions of being and viceversa.”<sup>20</sup>

In the *Asfār*, his major philosophical masterpiece and similar works, Mullā Ṣadrā begins with the discussion of *wujūd* and turns from time to time to Quranic verses. In the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* and his Quranic commentaries, he begins with the Quran and then turns to

the mysteries of *wujūd*. The two types of writing complement each other and reveal the Quranic commentaries of Mullā Ṣadrā as not only journeys into the inner meaning of the Word of God, but also penetrations into the inner dimension of universal existence itself. In these majestic commentaries, so little studied until now outside of Persia and even within the land of Mullā Ṣadrā's birth, one finds one of the most eloquent expositions of not only the meaning of God's revelation in the form of the Word but also the meaning of that other primordial revelation that is the cosmos and the abode of existence itself.

## Notes

1. Izutsu, always attracted to linguistic studies, had already devoted important works to the study of the Quran when in the Winter of 1962 we met him for the first time at the McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies. After delivering a lecture on Mullā Ṣadrā, we were told by Izutsu, who attended the lecture, that he was so deeply attracted to what had been said about the Safavid sage that he wanted to leave aside his Quranic and *Kalām* studies to devote his time fully to Mullā Ṣadrā and later Islamic philosophy and theosophy. This is in fact exactly what happened as the works of Izutsu during the last two decades of his life bear witness.
2. See H. Corbin (ed.), *Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysique*, Paris, 1993; Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. IV, Paris, 1971, pp. 54-122; S. H. Nasr, *The Transcendent Theosophy of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī*, Tehran, The Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977; Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, London, Curzon Press, 1996; Nasr, "Mullā Ṣadrā," in Nasr and O. Leaman (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 vols., London, Routledge, 1996, pp. 635-662; F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, Albany (N. Y.), State University Press of New York, 1976; and J. Morris (ed. and trans.), *Mullā Ṣadrā, Wisdom of the Throne*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981.
3. The essays of L. Peerwani on the subject are a rare exception. See her "Quranic Hermeneutics: The Views of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī," *British Society for Middle East Studies Proceedings*, 1991, pp. 468-477. Also Mullā Ṣadrā's commentary upon the *Āyat al-nūr* (Light Verse) has been translated and analyzed Muḥsin Sāliḥ in a doctoral thesis presented to Temple University in 1993.
4. The fuller title is *Tafsīr al-qur'ān al-karīm ta'līf Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn*, 7 vols., ed. M. Khwājawī, Qum, Bidār Press, 1366, A.H. solar/1987-1369/1990.
5. On these traditions of commentary see A. Habil, "Traditional Esoteric Com-

- mentaries," in S. H. Nasr, *The Quran: A Contemporary Commentary*, Crossroad Publications, 1987.
6. Muḥammad al-Dhahabī, *al-Ḥadīth*, 1967, vol. I, pp. 85-86.
  7. See G. Böwering, *The Message of the Quran: Hermeneutics of the Quran*, Leiden, Brill, 1980.
  8. See M. Chodkiewicz, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī*, trans. D. Streight, Albany, SUNY Press, 1993.
  9. We remember that in the preface to his writing his *al-Mizān* commentary on the Quran with us his reading of Rāzī's verses with which the 'Allāmah Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī's verses carefully before he wrote it with him. Once when we asked him how so important, he said that although the commentary contained so much value, it was those opposed to Ash'arism. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī stated that he was one of all of whom opposed Ash'arism. See *Tafsīr al-kabīr* of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, vol. 1, p. 10.
  10. An exception is L. Gardet, *Le Coran*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1951, although even in his case the commentary of the followers of Ibn Sinā in *Persepolis* by *d'Abou Ali al-Ḥusain b. Abd al-Malik al-Ḥafḥānī*, *Abd al-Malik al-Ḥafḥānī, La Révélation en français*, Leiden, E. Brill, 1967.
  11. We follow here the order of the *ahwāl Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn*, Tehran, 1366, pp. 1-10.
  12. As in his philosophical work, Ṣadr al-Dīn uses all kinds of gnostic and esoteric work, terms such as *mukāshshah* and *ḥikmah* have translated all such terms.
  13. See our *The Transcendent Philosophy of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī*, pp. 10-11.
  14. Usually translated as *hermeneutics*, *ta'wil* means literally to take things back from an inward center, to recenter them (take things back to that center). *al-zāhir* (the outward) to the inward (*al-bāṭin*) is also to the traditional masters, is also to the hidden and manifested issues.
  15. Mullā Ṣadrā's methodology

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mentaries," in S. H. Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality-Foundations*, New York, Crossroad Publications, 1987, pp. 24-47.

6. Muḥammad al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa'l-mufasssīrūn*, 2 vols., Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīth, 1967, vol. I, pp. 89.

7. See G. Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Quranic Hermeneutics of the Sufi Sahl al-Tustarī*, Berlin and New York, de Gruyter, 1980.

8. See M. Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore, Ibn Arabī, The Book, and the Law*, trans. D. Streight, Albany (N. Y.), State University of New York Press, 1993.

9. We remember that in the 1960's and 70's when 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'i was writing his *al-Mizān* commentary, he would often discuss in his weekly meetings with us his reading of Rāzī's commentary concerning the particular chapters and verses with which the 'Allāmah was concerned at that time. He would consider Rāzī's verses carefully before writing his own words without always agreeing with him. Once when we asked him why he considered an Ash'arite commentary so important, he said that although he was an Ash'arite, Rāzī's Quranic commentary contained so much valuable material that it had to be consulted by even those opposed to Ash'arism. As a direct intellectual descendent of Mullā Ṣadrā, 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'i stated that over the centuries the *ḥukamā-yi ilāhī* of Persia, all of whom opposed Ash'arism philosophically, nevertheless used to consult the *Tafsīr al-kabīr* of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī.

10. An exception is L. Gardet who, in his *La Pensée religieuse d'Avicenne* (Ibn Sīnā), Paris, J. Vrin, 1951, realized the significance of these commentaries although even in his case the interpretation given are different from those of later followers of Ibn Sīnā in Persia. See also A. f. von Mehren, *Traité mystiques d'Abou Ali al-Ḥusain b. Abdallāh b. Sīnā ou d'Avicenne: texte arabe avec l'explication en français*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1889-1891.

11. We follow here the order given by M. Khwājawī in his *Lawāmi' al-'arīfīn fī aḥwāl Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn*, Tehran, Āriyan Press, 1366, A.H. solar/1987, pp. 109 ff.

12. As in his philosophical works, so in the Quranic commentaries, Mullā Ṣadrā uses all kinds of gnostic and theosophical terms to designate the chapters of a work, terms such as *mukāshafah*, *kashf*, *rukn* and *tasbiḥ*. In this text, however, we have translated all such terms into simply chapters or parts.

13. See our *The Transcendent Theosophy of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shirāzi*, pp. 39 ff.

14. Usually translated as hermeneutic or esoteric interpretation and commentary, *ta'wīl* means literally to take back something to its origin. Since all things issue from an inward center, to reach the inner meaning of things means precisely to take things back to that center which is also their origin. To go from the outward (*al-zāhir*) to the inward (*al-bāṭin*), which is how *ta'wīl* has been defined by most traditional masters, is also to return to the Origin from which all that is outward and manifested issues.

15. Mullā Ṣadrā's methodology in commenting upon the Quran has been dis-

cussed by M. Khwājawī in his *Lawāmi' al-'arīfīn*, pp. 107 ff.

16. Translated by Muhsin Šālīh, *The Verse of Light: A Study of Mullā Šadrā's Philosophical Qur'ān Exegesis*, Ph. D. Thesis, Temple University, 1993, pp. 4-9.

17. This doctrine associated with the Muḥammadan Reality as the Logos as such seen within the Islamic universe has been treated by many earlier Sufis especially Ibn 'Arabi. On Ibn 'Arabi's theory of *walāyah/wilāyah* in general see M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints-Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi*, trans. L. Sherrard, Cambridge, The Islamic Text Society, 1993.

18. It is of the utmost significance to recall here that *āyah* means both verses of the Quran and phenomena of nature. See S. H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Albany (N. Y.), State University of New York Press, 1993, pp. 5 ff.

19. From the introduction of 'Ābidi Shāhrūdī to the *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* reprinted in Khwājawī, *Lawāmi' al-'arīfīn*, p. 202.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

## The Me

Happiness according to the term *sa'ādah*, and it re hereafter (*ukhrawiyyah*), contrary of *sa'ādah* is s misfortune and misery. *sa'ādah* refers to ultima bliss, the highest being worldly life have lived knowing obedience of ( so, we see that the relat connected with its relat it relates to three thing to knowledge and good as good health and secu the body (*khārijīyyah*) s the well-being of the s circumstances in relati pertains therefore not ( life as interpreted and g

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