



A Comparative Analysis of the Categorizations of the Contemporary Procedures Toward the Style of Thematic Interpretation

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Abstract

Nowadays, the subject-based "thematic interpretation" has been proposed as an efficient style in answering the doubts in human societies. In order to make it more productive and useful, the researchers promoted this interpretive style in each direction and sought to fix its deficiencies. The result of these efforts is the creation of various procedures in this interpretation style, each of which claims to discover a more complete and accurate view of the Qur'an. The multiplicity and diversity of these methods has led the people to categorize these procedures. The categorizations proposed by the researchers have been made from the perspective, which is sometimes not arranged on a single axis and is not comprehensive of all procedures and divisions of each other, which has led to the split of opinions and dispersion of minds. This article firstly introduces the contemporary classifications of the procedures and then proposes a comprehensive classification by using a descriptive-analytical method. The classification consists of five general procedures for thematic interpretation which cover all the known previous procedures: "Science-based", "Problem-based, coming from Society", "Method-based", "Vocabulary-based" and "Analysis-based". These five procedures are both inclusive and exclusive.

Keywords: *Interpretation; Thematic Interpretation; Procedure; Categorizations; Contemporary Style*

1- Introduction

There are two types of major styles in the field of interpretation of the Qur'an; The style of "Sequential Interpretation" (*Tafsir Tartibi*) and the style of "Thematic Interpretation" (*Tafsir Mawdhoui*). In the style of sequential interpretation, the interpreter examines the Qur'an from the beginning to the end verse by verse, to reach the intended divine meaning intended; but in the style of thematic interpretation, the interpreter to discover the Qur'anic perspective on a particular subject, compiles and explores all the verses related to it (Makarem Shirazi, 1374 SH, vol. 1, p. 21; Sobhani, 1383 SH, vol. 1, p. 23).

In the sequential interpretation, the researcher seeks to understand the meanings of the vocabulary and connotation of the verses in order to discover the intended divine meaning, and in this way he examines and studies the verses of the Holy Qur'an according to the order of verses and chapters or the

order of revelation, aiming to understand the text of the Holy Qur'an. While the researcher in the thematic interpretation seeks to discover the view of the Qur'an on a particular subject with consideration of the similar verses in the subject and the content, so he has a higher purpose than understanding a single verse or its vocabulary. His goal is to achieve a coherent view of the Qur'an that can be in addition to the theoretical aspect, has a practical and functioning aspect, so the thematic interpretation is of particular importance. Of course, this does not mean the triviality of the sequential interpretation, because that is the basis of the thematic interpretation, and the interpreter in this field is inevitably in need of that.

Today, due to the flourishing of different sciences and promoting the intellectual level of human societies on the one hand and the emergence of various schools and emerging issues and doubts on the other hand, the enthusiasm of different classes, especially the young and educated generation, to know the perspective of the Qur'an has increased. As a result, it is necessary to present the Qur'an's view in a scientific and up-to-date way, and this is possible through thematic interpretation. The interpreter in the thematic interpretation has the opportunity to present the view of the Qur'an systematically and orderly to the world, and in this way, Qur'anic knowledge can be presented in front of other schools of thought and intellectual systems. Schools that, despite many deviations, have tried to form their own ideas and to introduce a solid basis for it. Now, since the Qur'anic teachings have a solid and divine origin and are fully accurate, it is appropriate to be provided to them through a coherent and systematic presentation.

In order to discover the Qur'an's view on different subjects, researchers use different ways; Sometimes they use different science categories, sometimes the revelatory order is the key to the discovery of the Qur'anic perspective, sometimes they pass through the vocabulary to the synonyms, alternatives and antonyms, and sometimes they use up-to-date experiential methods. According to the various methods of researchers, different procedures have been invented in the style of thematic interpretation. The meaning of the procedure is the series of consecutive and interconnected steps to achieve a goal (Robbins, 1384 SH, p. 95). And here, it refers to the set of methods and approaches used to obtain the Qur'anic opinion in a particular subject in the style of thematic interpretation. The formation of a variety of research interpretations has led to the provision of categories that are sometimes not based on the same logic and are not included in the same subcategory. In addition, they have not create the expected order in styles and have failed to reduce their dispersion. This article attempts to provide a categorization of some of the classifications in contemporary thematic interpretation styles, which is based on certain logic and encompasses other procedures.

2- The Evolution of the Thematic Interpretation

Some consider the thematic interpretation to be the result of this current era, but it was used in the era of the message - even if in a limited form and in the field of lexical understanding only, and people referred to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his close companions to understand the Qur'an and benefit from its fresh wellspring of knowledge. For instance, the recommendation of the beloved Prophet of Islam (PBUH) to Ibn Mas'ud to avoid "the speech without knowledge" (Majlis, 1404 AH: c. 74, p. 92). He also referred to numerous verses of the Qur'an, including verse 36 of Surah Isra': ***{Do not follow what you do not know; the ears, eyes, and hearts will all be held responsible for their deeds}***; and verse 19 of Surah Zukhruf: ***{...their words as such will be recorded and they will be questioned for it}***; and verse 18 of Surah Qaf: ***{He says no word but that there is a ready observer beside him}***; and the verse 16 of the same chapter: ***{...and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein}***. In another Hadith, Imam Ali (AS), citing the verses of the Holy Qur'an, divides the concept of "disbelief" into five types (Majlis, 1404 AH, c. 69, p. 100). In another narration, Musa ibn Ja'far (AS) explained the status of wisdom and reason to "Hisham ibn Hakam" stating the verses related to "Ulu al-Albab" (The wise) which includes verses 269/ Baqarah, 7/ Al Imran, 190/ Al Imran, 9 / Zumar, 29/Sad, 54/Mumin. (Kulayni, 1407 AH, vol. 1, p. 15).

Looking at the evolution of the thematic interpretation, it turns out that in the early stages, the subjects of this style are quite simple and intra-Qur'anic subjects, and are presented only by the certain verses of each subject. Unfortunately, the same method has been subjected to the stagnation after the era of the Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and has been used in a completely minimal form before the contemporary period (Akbari, 1393 SH, p. 38). Therefore, despite the formation of thematic interpretation in the first centuries, it has not been a long time as a method in front of the sequential method. Ayatullah Misbah after dividing the thematic interpretation into three categories; "*Tafsir al-Kalimah*" (literal interpretation), "*Tafsir Wasfi*" (descriptive interpretation), and "*Tafsir Tahlili*" (analytical interpretation), considers the thematic interpretation of the first and second category to relate to the era of the revelation, and he only introduces the third category of the thematic interpretation as the equivalent to the sequential interpretation, which has been the result of the last century and has no long history (Zulfiqari, 1388 SH, p. 8).

"*Ahkam al-Qur'an*" by Muhammad ibn Saeb Kalbi (146 AH), "*Zubdat al-Bayan*" by Muhaqqiq Ardabili (d. 993 AH) and "*Kanz al-Irfan*" by Fadhil Miqdid (1313 AH) are among the previous works of thematic interpretation. It is worth mentioning that more than 30 books of this series are mentioned in the book "*Al-Dhari'a*" (Tehrani, 1408 AH, vol. 1, p. 40-44). This interpretation method, which was initially and limitedly used in the examination of jurisprudential verses in the books of "*Ayat al-Ahkam*" (the verses of Sharia laws), in recent decades has been used in a broader form to better and more accurately examine all verses of the Qur'an in works such as the books: "*Maarif Qur'an*" by Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi (1373 SH), "*Payam Quran*" by Naser Makarem Shirazi (1374 SH), "*Tafsir Mawdhui*" by Abdullah Javadi Amoli (1378 SH), "*Manshoor Javid*" by Jafar Sobhani (1383 SH), "*Quran Karim va Zaminehaye Eghtesadi*" by Mohammad Reza Nekounam (1386 SH), "*Daramadi bar Maktab Jameashenasi Quran Karim*" by Mohsen Nasri (1391 SH), "*Quran ve Ravanshenasi*" by Mohammad Uthman Nejati (1391 SH) and "*Quran, Kitab-e Akhlaq*" by Mohammad Taghi Sobhaninia (1393 SH) and hundreds of other works.

3- Introducing the Categorizations of the Thematic Interpretation

As it noted beforehand, thematic interpretations are made in a variety of ways, and we see the flourishing of various interpretations to the extent that an independent branch has been formed which is called "Research in the Interpretations" and valuable works in introducing and analyzing these interpretations. Following this diversity, some researchers have tried to compile these procedures according to certain criteria. The following are some of the categories of thematic interpretation in the present day.

3-1- Categorization on the Axis of Insight, Tendency, Method

Some researchers, while acknowledging that the method of commentators are not the same, select some intra-Qur'anic subjects. And some of the consensus, like the ones in *Ayat al-Ahkam* (verses contain Sharia laws), are merely citations, and some are analytical, descriptive and comparative, and the even the scholars themselves are not aware of this contradiction. They believe that thematic interpretations can be divided into three categories: first in terms of "beliefs, insights, and religious and social tendencies"; Second, based on the "method", that is the way the interpreter deal with the issue and the thematic interpretation; Third, based on "arrangement and order of the subjects and utilization of the verses" (Ayazi, 1383 SH, pp. 67 and 71).

As can be seen in this categorization is not exclusive, where the second category is overlapping with the third. In fact, the arrangement of the verses and the order of the subjects are based on the interpreter's method and his consideration, and these two are not separate. In addition, contrary to what is stated in the first category, the interpreter should not interfere with his presumptions in the interpretation of the verses in order to remain immune from the "*Tafsir bi'l Ra'y*" (personal-opinion-based interpretation). It is worth noting that the purpose of classifying thematic interpretation methods is not re-

stating the previous works. What is essential in the classification of thematic interpretation is the output of thematic interpretations and how to achieve it; that is the Qur'an's perspective should be achieved, regardless of any insight, belief, field and analytical system.

3-2 - Categorization on the Axis of the Qur'anic Terms, Chapters and Themes

Another categorization divides the thematic interpretation into "the terms of the Qur'an", "the chapters of the Qur'an" and "the themes of the Qur'an". In the thematic interpretation of "The Terms of the Qur'an", the interpreter seeks to understand the meaning of the word and term in the Qur'an by selecting a certain Qur'anic words and collecting verses that include that word and its derivatives. The stages of this thematic interpretation are the collection of verses, the order of verses, the study of lexical meanings, the examination of practical meanings and the literary aspect. Despite the old background of examining the vocabulary of the Qur'an, all of the researches are common in a major weakness, and that is, only the word has been dealt with in particular, and the relationship between the word in various Qur'anic usages has not been considered.

Some scholars, such as Amin Khuli, turned to the method of "literary or expressive interpretation" to compensate for this weakness, in which the thematic examination of the word is considered a necessity. In the second procedure, which is the thematic interpretation of the "Qur'anic Surah", the interpreter considering the content of the surah and the meaning of the verses, takes a general and comprehensive look at the whole surah - as a set - and attempts to determine the theme of the surah and discover it, then mention the relations of the verses and the relation of the surah components, in order to determine the compatibility of the verses. The seemingly incompatible verses may be examined and matched by discovering the relationship between them. Burhanuddin Baqa'i has mentioned many relations in the interpretation of "*Nazm al-Durar fi Tanasub al-Ayat wa al-Suwar*", but he has failed to arrange these connections according to the theme of the surah. In the third procedure, which is the thematic interpretation of the "Qur'anic themes", the interpreter selects a certain theme of the Qur'an and examines the verses that are somehow related to it.

The stages of this interpretation method are numbered in some items that are: 1- Paying attention to the real world: The commentator at this stage is aware of that the Qur'an has been gradually revealed during 23 years regarding the real world, so its teachings are not only the guide to human beings in self - knowledge and ontology, but also it is related to the real world and the realities of human society. 2- Benefitting from human sciences: The Qur'an deals with the various sciences, so as the interpreter develops his information in different sciences and expands the radius of his thought in the shadow of human experience, he can better benefit from the Qur'anic teachings. 3- Explanation and determination of the subject: At this stage the selected subject must be determined in terms of description and meaning. The interpreter should note that by resorting to the comprehensiveness of the Qur'an, cannot enter any random subject. 4- Examination of the Qur'anic verses: In order to discover the opinion of the Qur'an on a particular subject, it is necessary to examine all the verses included in that subject. 5. Inference of the Qur'anic perspective: In the final stage the commentator tries to discover the perspective of the Qur'an on the subject by examining the relation among discovered concepts and their logical order. (Zarei, 2005, p. 13).

In the aforementioned classification criticism, it is said that the categorization due to the order of the Qur'anic chapters, is a part of the sequential interpretation, not the thematic interpretation; because the discovery of purpose of the surah is not called the thematic interpretation. The interpreter in the thematic interpretation seeks the Qur'anic view of a particular subject, not the discovery of each surah. In the third categorization, the division is based on the Qur'anic themes in many ways, such as the *Istintaqi* (interrogational), the *Tanzili* (chronological), data-based method, and so on, which here only one method has been mentioned. In addition, the definition of the first category can be subdivided into the third category. In fact, the classification presented not only uncomprehensive but also has overlap.

3-3- Comprehensive and Non-Comprehensive Categorization

In another categorization, the procedures in the style of thematic interpretation are divided into "comprehensive" and "non-comprehensive" interpretations. "Non-comprehensive Thematic Interpretation" is done in two ways. In the first method, regardless of a particular logical system, a subject is discussed in the verses of the Qur'an, such as the books of the "Ayat al-Ahkam". In the second method, called the "Communicative thematic interpretation", the verses related to several relevant topics are collected and interpreted. For example, verses such as "*Taqwa*" (piety), "*Iman*" (faith) and "*Al-Amal al-Salih*" (righteous deeds) or themes such as "*Mawt*" (death), "*Barzakh*" (purgatory) and "*Maad*" (resurrection) that have a semantic relevance are collected and interpreted, so that the commentator can get a more comprehensive meaning of these themes. The Qur'anic themes in "Comprehensive Thematic Interpretation" are extracted in specific ways, including:

- 1) Division of the Qur'anic teachings into "beliefs, ethics and laws": In this way, the interpreter first deals with the issue of genesis, origination, bringing into existence, and issues related to creation in the Holy Qur'an because if there was no creation, belief and ethics would not make sense.
- 2) Division of the Qur'anic teachings by "human centeredness": Since man has different dimensions such as the material, spiritual, individual, social, worldly, and unworldly aspects, it is necessary to divide the Qur'anic teachings based on these dimensions.
- 3) Division the teachings of the Qur'an into "natural sequence"; In this method, the interpreter advances what the nature requires to come before, and delay what the nature requires to come later.
- 4) "The thematic interpretation without observing the order among the titles": In this method, the commentator considering the various subjects such as "belief", "ethics", "law", "social issues", etc., studies the Qur'an without any presumption, so, he collects the relevant verses from the entire Qur'an and summarize and interpret them.
- 5) Thematic interpretation by "monotheistic method": In this way, the interpreter presents an issue from the real of life and society which is partly known to him, to the Qur'an and search the Qur'an for the answer. This method is the invention of the Shahid Al-Sadr, which, unlike some methods that the interpreter must refer to the Qur'an with an empty and clear mind, requires previous studies and knowledge to present the issues to the Qur'an with a wealth of knowledge and experience, and communicate with the Qur'an in order to find the solution. The commentator has an active role in this method and he makes the Qur'an speaks as Imam Ali (AS) says in the 86th sermon of Nahj al-Balaghah:

«And that (light) is the Holy Qur'an. Ask the Quran to speak, and it never speaks, but I will inform you of its teachings. Be aware that in the Qur'an is the knowledge of what comes (in the future), and the news of the past (of the creation of the heavens and the earth and what is in them, and how the previous ones were) and the cure for your ailment and the arrangement of what is related to you.»

- 6) Thematic interpretation in the way of "Allah centeredness": In this method, "Allah" is the center and there is a logical order among themes in such a way that the former theme prioritizes the later theme. The interpreter puts the verses related to the subject together and uses all the verses to clarify the vague points. This is the very interpretation of the "Qur'an by Qur'an" and the way "Allamah Tabatabai" has taken in "Tafsir Al-Mizan" (Qasemi, 1384 SH, p. 29).

In the critique of this categorization, it is worth noting that what is stated in the first method of non-comprehensive division in the example of "Ayat al-Ahkam" is not necessarily a subdivided into the

thematic interpretation. If the verses of Sharia laws are examined regardless to a specific subject and in the form of verse by verse, from the beginning of the Qur'an, the interpretation is sequential. And the claim that this method has no system is no acceptable. In addition, in some categories, such as the category of Quranic knowledge into "beliefs, morals and rules", the formulation of the internal content of the Quran occurs from the outside, which is not acceptable; because it is not clear that the opinion of the Qur'an is also in the same direction and it is considered as imposing the opinion on the Qur'an. Furthermore, some categories from a comprehensive thematic interpretation can be summarized into less categories. In the latter case, also the thematic interpretation i.e. "Allah centeredness" is the same as the thematic interpretation of the "Qur'an by Qur'an", thus it is excluded from thematic interpretation. Although this classification has attempted to separate among existing methods, the above classification has no single system. Also, some methods, such as thematic interpretation, are not observed in this classification based on the order of revelation of the surahs, or the word-based thematic interpretation.

3-4 - Intra and Extra-Qur'anic Categorizations

In the other category, thematic interpretation procedures are divided into "intra-Qur'anic", "extra-Qur'anic", "comparative" and "interdisciplinary" procedures. The intra-Qur'anic thematic interpretation, which is the traditional method in this interpretation style, is based on the principles of "the authenticity of the Qur'an's appearance", "the validity of the method of Quran by Quran interpretation", the principle of non-contradiction in the verses of the Qur'an", in which the interpreter attempts to achieve the intended divine meaning by using narrative evidence within the text. For example, to understand the origin of the revelation of the Qur'an, the interpreter can refer to verse 1 of Surah al-Qadr: {*Verily, We sent down the Holy Qur'ān In the Night of Qadr*}, or to the verse 185 of Surah al-Baqarah: {*The month of Ramadan, wherein the Qur'ān was sent down...*}, or to understand the allegorical verses (*Mutashabihat*) he can refer to the decisive verses (*Muhkamat*) as the recommendation of the Quran in the verse 7 of Surah Al-Imran: {*... Some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical...*}. It is noteworthy that issues such as proving the existence of God, the general prophecy and the miracle of the Qur'an are not possible with this interpretive procedure because it entails an infinite regress. Another procedure in this categorization is the "extra-Qur'anic procedure" founded by Shahid Al-Sadr.

In this procedure, the Qur'anic themes are taken from the outside and the context of the society, and the interpreter is obliged to present the questions raised to the Qur'an in order to achieve the Qur'an's view and meet the needs of society and to get the answers from the Qur'an. The basis of this method, which is the accountability of the Holy Qur'an in all eras and places, led to new interpretations such as "Quran and Art", "Quran and secularism" and "Quran and pluralism". The third procedure in this categorization is the "Comparative Thematic Interpretation", in which the purpose of the interpreter is to understand a phenomenon or view in the light of comparison. This procedure removes the interpreter out of the exclusivity and provides him with the opportunity to understand the various aspects of the theme.

The most common use of this procedure is in the disputed verses between Shia and Sunni such as "Ayat al-Wilayah" (Ma'da/3; Ahzab/33; ...), "Ayat al-Ahkam" such as the verse of ablution (Ma'da/6) and "Ayat al-Jabr wa al-Tafwidh". This method is not unique in the Qur'an and has been extended to the "Comparative Study of the Qur'an and the Two Testimonies" or "Comparative Studies among the Denominations", and as in interpretations such as Alusi's "Ruh al-Maani", Tabari's "Majma al-Bayan", Sheikh Tusi's "Tibyan" and Allameh Marifat's "Al-Tafsir al-Athari al-Jami". The fourth procedure of this categorization is the "Interdisciplinary Thematic Interpretation" in which a theme is discussed from the Qur'anic perspective and related knowledge. In this method, the researcher identifies a phenomenon in the light of the effective dialogue among the approaches of the various sciences, such as Ibn Sina's Interpretation of the Throne (*Arsh*) in verse 17 of Surah al-Haqqah: {*... and the Throne of your Lord will be borne that day by eight [angels]*} as "The ninth carousel of Ptolemy Board". (Rezaei Esfahani, 1388 SH, p. 31).

Criticism of this classification is a "comparative" and "interdisciplinary" methods are of study methods that are applicable in various procedures. A theme can be intra or extra Qur'anic and be examined in an interdisciplinary or comparative way, so the classification presented is not inclusive nor exclusive. In addition, "intra-Qur'anic" and "extera- Qur'anic" are not two procedures, but there are two zones that observe the origin of a theme.

3-5- Categorization on the Axis of the Order and Structure of the Chapters

In the other classification, there are six approaches in the thematic interpretation:

- 1) Thematic interpretation in logical order: This is the same as the common thematic interpretation in which the various verses mentioned under the same subject in the Qur'an are collected and summarized to clarify the Qur'an's opinion on that subject and its various dimensions.
- 2) Thematic interpretation in the order of "Al-Mushaf" (The Quranic manuscript): This emerging procedure is the same as a chronological (*Tanzili*) procedure that examines the evolution and formation of the themes in the process of revelation. With this procedure, it is possible to achieve the method of institutionalization of Islamic teachings in the society. And it is also possible to compile the curve of intellectual developments, which means that the frequency of verses on a single topic in different years can be determined, and in this way, the evolution of the theme can be obtained.
- 3) Thematic interpretation based on the structure of the surah: This procedure is based on a comprehensive look to the content of the chapter. The interpreter seeks to understand new points about the theme in the pursuit of the main subject of the chapter and discover its semantic cohesion.
- 4) Structural and Mus'haf-based style thematic interpretation: The integration of the two previous procedures in which the interpreter considers both the interpretation of the verses in the order that is in *al-Mus'haf al-Sharif* (Qur'anic manuscript), and the communicability of the themes presented in the Qur'an and the latitude and longitude relationship among them.
- 5) Structural and revelatory style thematic interpretation: This is the same as the previous procedure except that the verses are examined based on the revelatory order.
- 6) The comprehensive thematic interpretation or the semantic network of the Qur'an: In this method, the interpreter uses different procedures to try to draw the semantic network on the intended theme. There are essential components to draw the semantic network in a particular theme of the Holy Qur'an, including: "Preliminary Discussions" such as "The Importance and Background of the Subject"; "Identifying the Nature of the Subject" such as "Definition, Instances, Types"; "Identifying the Dimensions and Consequences of the Subject" such as "Principles, Results and Outcomes"; "Relationship with Other Themes" such as "Prerequisite Themes, Communicable Themes"; "Processes" such as "the platform of its emergence, the process of formation and growth, its barriers and pathology" (Khamehgar, 1389, p. 238).

It is noteworthy in criticizing this categorization that the structure of a chapter and obtaining its purpose is not falling within the thematic interpretation. The discovery of the purpose of a surah and its semantic cohesion can serve the thematic interpretation. Although this category is more complete than other categories, it also does not include all the thematic interpretation procedures such as science-based, analysis-based, which will be explained later.

As noted, each researcher has categorized thematic interpretation procedures from their point of view. The major problem of the categories are the lack of a uniform criterion, as well as their

comprehensiveness. In the following, an attempt has been made to classify the procedures mentioned in the thematic interpretation according to a uniform criterion, so that other categories are placed under the same category and are parts of the same category.

4- The Selected Category

The common element in all the procedures raised in the thematic interpretation is a question that comes into the mind of the Qur'anic researcher; sometimes from the outside and sometimes from inside of the Qur'an, and he digs into the text of the Qur'an in search of an answer to that question. So the thematic interpretation is basically question-based and accordingly the researcher's approach in the face of these questions arises as thematic interpretation procedures. The authors (of this article) consider the five interpretive procedures of "science-based", "problem-based coming from society", "method-based", "vocabulary-based" and "analysis-oriented" can be a confidential categorization for existing procedures in the thematic interpretation style, which, while being inclusive, is also comprehensive of other procedures and frees the researcher from dispersion and confusion. In the following, the procedures will be introduced.

4-1- Science-Based Procedure

The reason of naming this procedure of the thematic interpretation style as "science-based procedure" is for its use of different sciences. Two approaches are conceivable in this interpretation procedure, that different sciences play a significant role in both of them. The first approach, which is less addressed, is to seek the Qur'anic view of conventional categories in different sciences. In this approach, the researcher is looking for whether the categorization of different sciences is approved according to the Qur'an?

For instance, in the science of theology, there are levels for monotheism mentioned by theologians, so the researcher seeks to confirm this category according to the verses of the Qur'an. The second approach is to use other sciences classifications in the organization of Qur'anic teachings. Due to the vastness and diversity of the topics raised in the Quran, the researcher is inevitably looking for a criterion to categorize and organize the Quranic teachings, which he takes from different sciences and divides the verses under each category according to his *Ijtihad* (personal approach). In this way, the interpreter uses the findings of other sciences and the categorization that exists in different sciences and collects the Qur'anic verses according to them. For example, in the theme of "*Tawheed*" (Monotheism) he sought help from the categories proposed in the science of "*Kalaam*" (Theology) and under the division of "*Tawheed*" into "*Tawheed fi al-Zhat*" (Monotheism in the Essence), "*Tawheed fi al-sifat*" (Monotheism in the Attributes), "*Tawheed fi al-Afal*" (Monotheism in the Actions) etc., he collects the verses under each category. This is the case in the interpretation of the "*Nomooneh*" by Naser Makarem Shirazi (1995) or in the interpretation of the "*Manshour Javid*" by Ja'far Sobhani (1383 SH).

The researchers of the style of "Science-based thematic interpretation" in the issues such as "social" and "psychological" subjects have also referred to the assured findings of these sciences, which are mostly empirical and epistemological, and their achievements are the basis for a better understanding of the Qur'anic point of view or the confirmation of human findings. For instance, in the book of "*Psychology in the Qur'an: Concepts and Teachings*" by Mohammad Kaviani and Ali Ahmadpanahi (1399 SH) in several chapters in psychology such as motivation, emotion, perception and cognition, growth, social psychology, mental health and positive psychology, the view of the Qur'an (on each subject) also is explained. Even in the "*Ayat al-Ahkam*", this is the case, and the interpreter interprets divine verses according to conventional categories in "jurisprudence". For example, in the book of "*Fiqh Al -Qur'an*" by Qutbuddin Saeed ibn Habatullah Ravandi (1405 AH), the author in the interpretation and expression of the verses of the Qur'anic laws, starts his comments as it is contained in the chapters of jurisprudence books by "*Taharat*", then "*Salat*" and finally the chapter of "*Diyat*".

4-2- Problem-Based Procedure Coming from Society or the Interrogational Style

The reason of naming this procedure of the thematic interpretation style as "Problem-based coming from society" is that in this procedure, an issue raised from the heart of the society is presented to the Qur'an and the researcher seeks the opinion of the Qur'an in relation to it.

Shahid Al-Sadr can be considered the flag-bearer of this practice. With a pathological perspective, he has developed a transformation in the conventional thematic interpretation and has invented an interrogational (*Istintaqi*) procedure. His thematic interpretation style is different from the thematic interpretation methods of that time and has been formed following the shortcomings of the sequential interpretation method. To find out the reason of Shahid Al-Sadr's turning to this interpretive style, it is quite necessary to ask his opinion about sequential (*Tajziyai*)¹ and monotheistic interpretation. Shahid Al-Sadr considers the disconnected (*Tajziyai*) and monotheistic interpretation to be a tafsir in which the exegete interprets the Qur'an verse by verse, and in this way uses tools such as appearance (*Zhuhour*), verses with the same theme, and the narrated hadiths. But this use is only done to discover the literal meaning of the verse, and its connection with the related verses is not taken into account.

For this reason, the researcher has encountered a lot of scattered information in the analytical commentary, which in some cases has no result except religious contradictions because finding a verse is enough to justify the denomination and gather followers to support it, as seen in many theological problems, such as *Jabr*, *Ikhtiyar*, and *Tafwidh*. He considers the sequential method to be the factor hindering the growth of Quranic thought, because despite thirteen centuries of domination over interpretation, no new schools of Islamic thought have been created and despite various changes in the field of life, interpretation has remained the same.

He believes that what is commonplace as the thematic interpretation is the study of a definite subject in the Qur'an such as *Asbab al-Nuzoul* (Causes of divine revelation), *Qiraat* (Different Quranic Readings) or *Nasikh and Mansukh* (Abrogating and abrogated verses) etc., which is in fact a collection of a number of issues that are not much different from the sequential interpretation. Shahid Al-Sadr believes Just as the jurists, through the examination of a set of hadiths, achieve a theory and ruling of the Sharia, and the meaning of the hadiths in a single form, does not lead to the ruling of the Sharia, in the interpretation, it is also not possible to reach the perspective of the Qur'an by examining the meaning of a single verse.

He also considers the progress of jurisprudence and the richness of jurisprudential scientific studies to be subject to the thematic method. He believes that If the jurists did not try to answer the questions of the *Mukallafin* (Mature Muslims) in various transactional and penal fields, etc. based on the combination of hadiths and evidences and extracting the opinion of Islam, they would never have reached their current status. (Al-Sadr, 1379 SH, p. 38).

Another reason that led Shahid Al-Sadr to bring about a monotheistic interpretation is the passive role of the sequential interpreter. He believes that in the process of sequential interpretation, the text is in the role of the speaker, and the commentator or researcher plays the role of the listener who sits in front of the Qur'an with the reporter and empty mind in order to be just listener and narrator. On the contrary, in the monotheistic approach, the researcher's questions come from the outside world and social life, where the researcher begins question and answer with the text of the Qur'an and attempts to discover the Qur'anic theory through its comparison with human experiences. Shahid Al-Sadr believes that interpretation is not apart from the legacy of human experience and starts from the real world and ends with the Qur'an, not to begin from the Qur'an and lead to it.

¹ - What is meant by analytical interpretation (Tafsir Tajziyai) is an interpretation in the framework of which the interpreter interprets the Qur'an, verse by verse, based on the order and sequence they have in the Qur'an. (Translator Note)

Shahid Al-Sadr consider the expression of "Istintaq" in the word of Imam Ali (AS) in the sermon 86 of Nahj al-Balagha: «*And that (light) is the Holy Qur'an. Ask the Quran to speak, and it never speaks, but I will inform you of its teachings. Be aware that in the Qur'an is the knowledge of what comes (in the future), and the news of the past (of the creation of the heavens and the earth and what is in them, and how the previous ones were) and the cure for your ailment and the arrangement of what is related to you*» to be the presentation of society's problems to the Qur'an in order to respond to it, and considers the duty of the thematic interpreter to be presentation of the all human findings and the thoughts of his age to the Qur'an at any time in order to achieve the Qur'anic perspective about that subject with the help of a collection of divine verses.

This issue itself causes the preservation of the high status of the Qur'an and indicates the inexhaustibility of the divine verses, while the literal interpretation is limited and finite. The thematic feature of this interpretation, from the perspective of Shahid Al-Sadr, is due to the fact that the interpreter initiates his effort with a subject from the real world, and he also select a collection of verses of the same theme. Its monotheistic feature is also due to the integration between human experience and the Qur'an (not that the human experience is imposed upon the Qur'an) and also due to the fact that a single theoretical combination is established among the detailed meanings of the verses.

It is worth mentioning that despite the contradiction between these two methods of interpretation in terms of form, goals and results, he did not consider them logically separable, and he believes that thematic interpretation requires the meanings of the verses and sequential interpretation is necessary as a foundation of monotheistic interpretation. (Al-Sadr, 1379 SH, P. 38).

4-3- Method-Based Procedure

Proponents of this procedure believe that by examining the verses in the order of revelation, one can achieve the institutionalization of divine teachings and the necessary steps in cultural transformation. This is the reason for naming this procedure as "method-based". In this procedure, the researcher seeks to discover the method of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in institutionalizing the Qur'anic teachings and localizing those methods in the present society. He considers the Qur'an an educational book that has institutionalized Islamic values in then-society in a gradual process and step by step.

Answers to questions such as "How do people turn from polytheism to monotheism?", "What is the method of reviving moral values?", "What is the method of committing people to acts of worship, including Hajj, prayer, and zakat?" etc., it is possible only by discovering the methods of valorization of the society in the age of revelation and adapting it to the present society. In other words, the reason for the researcher's approach to the chronological (*Tanzili*) procedure can be seen as the discovery of the methods of evolution of Islamic education in society based on the pattern of the Prophet (PBUH) and his community (Behjatpour, 1392 SH, p. 76).

Another reason for the approach of the commentator of the descent, which can be considered as a kind of introduction to the first reason, is to achieve the maximum knowledge of the age of revelation and the atmosphere that governs it, as well as the discovery of the wisdom of the Qur'anic "*Taqdim wa Takhir*" (advance and delay cases) and the relevance of its concepts.

According to the testimony of the first verse of Surah Ibrahim, the *Tanzili* researcher considers the purpose of the revelation of the Quran to be the exit of people from darkness to light: {*A Book has been revealed to you, (Muhammad), so that, by the permission of their Lord, you would be able to lead people from darkness into light along the path of the Majestic, Praised One.*} He believes that this goal is beyond the time. (Behjatpour, 1977, p. 15)

Therefore, he is trying to achieve the methods of culture-building in his era by setting the example of the society of the age of revelation and in this way, he pays attention to the effective elements

in the revelatory time such as direct addressees, the culture of the society in the age of revelation, different types of religious and social classes and their evolution, and he uses the interpretation of the Qur'an by Qur'an, the Sunnah, the sayings of the Companions, the means and atmosphere of revelation (Behjatpour, 2013, p. 188, 198, 255; P. 236).

The chronological researcher believes that the Qur'an, in order to bring about change in the culture of the people of the revelatory age and to institutionalize divine knowledge, put forward its teachings in the framework of the society of that era, and in this way, a practical example of behavior modification has come to the fore, which is a guide for implementing cultural transformation in other societies and eras. In other words, as Imam Sadiq (AS) has said: "*Quran is bound to address indirectly*". (Kulayni, 1407 AH, vol. 2, p. 630)

The Almighty God has conveyed his message to others through dialogue and interaction with the people of then-age. Therefore, the researcher examines and reflects the cultural characteristics of the revelatory age and adapts the achievements to the requirements of the later era in order to achieve new strategies in building the culture.

In fact, he considers the Qur'an as one of the most efficient patterns in the formation of religious and spiritual transformation that, with careful consideration of its components, methods, dimensions, challenges and shortcomings, and by simulating and localizing its transformation plan with target societies, can reach a model of institutionalizing Islamic values in the present age.

On the one hand, the chronological researcher tries to understand the cultural and environmental conditions of that time as deeply as possible, to understand the contents of the Qur'an, which are expressed with degraded interpretations and in harmony with the Arab vision and understanding of the age of revelation, and on the other hand, he tries to understand aspects a new understanding achieved by the progress of human insight and knowledge. The researcher of the chronological style considers this process, which is referred to by the term "*Al-Jary wa Al-Tatbiq*" (Applicability and comparison), as the reason for the continuity and survival of the Qur'an in the later ages after the age of revelation. And interpretations of the Holy Quran in the verse 31 of Surah Muddathir: **{It is only a Reminder for humanity}** and verse 32 of the same surah: **{As a warning unto men}** to be a reason for his opinion and a proof of the universality of the Qur'an, and emphasizes the issue that this divine miracle does not remain locked in the narrow fence of time and environment. (Behjatpour, 1397 SH, p. 23-28).

Another reason for the chronological researcher to approach this style is to understand the frequency of each topic in different years. This means that the frequency of the verses of a topic is examined in different years, and it is drawn in a bar chart, and thus the evolution curve of the topic is determined.

With the help of this curve, one can approach the atmosphere of the revelatory era and understand the challenges of each age. In other words, through the thematic interpretation, the history of Islam can be explored from the perspective of cultural and intellectual developments (Khamehgar, 1389 SH, p. 243). Bazargan in the book of "*Seyr-e Tahavvol-e Qur'an*" (Course of the Transformation of the Qur'an) achieved the transformation curve in various subjects in this way. He showed that the most jurisprudential verses were revealed in the 9th year of Hijrah and the most verses that describe the attributes of heaven and hell were revealed in the 3rd year of the Prophethood (Bi'that). (Bazargan, 1365 SH, p. 157 _210). All the mentioned cases are possible in the shadow of the interpretation in revelation order, sequentially and thematically, but of course, sequential- chronological (*Tartibi-Tanzili*) interpretation is the introduction and one of the essentials of thematic interpretation, and it helps the researcher to find the verses that are separated from the text for the thematic topic and to examine the revelatory text and space.

4-4- Vocabulary-Based Procedure

The baseness of the Qur'anic vocabulary and the focus on their evolution is the reason for the naming of this interpretation. From Toshihiko Izutsu to the present scientists who have a more evolved view in this way, they believe that by analyzing the meaning of the key words of the Quran, one can reach the culture and worldview that exists behind each word and reach a higher understanding of this divine book.

The interpreter selects a word of the Qur'anic vocabulary that play a key role in understanding intended divine meaning and by examining its aspects, whether the word in question was used in its previous literal meaning or God Almighty used this word for the first time and what is its meaning and such questions, he tries to achieved the more and the better understanding of the Holy Quran.

A careful examination of the words known today as "semantics" helps the researcher to understand the author's intention. For a better understanding of this interpretive procedure, first the definition of "semantics" is presented from the Izutsu's point of view as the creator of this procedure and the one who used this method scientifically in the understanding of the divine book for the first time. "Semantics" is a science that shows the meaning of the word in the widest possible sense. A meaning so broad that it includes any concept that is similar to the word in question.

"Semantics" can be considered a new type of philosophy that is used in various specialized fields such as linguistics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, neurology, physiology, biology, analytical philosophy and symbolic logic, mathematics, etc. With such a wide scope, there is no a comprehensive definition so that it is used in all sciences alike, and rather, every scientist defines this term as he likes. Izutsu is no exception to this rule and considers "semantics" based on his findings to be a research and analytical study about the key words of the language through which the ethnic worldview is known. According to Izutsu, language is not only a means of speaking and thinking, but also a tool for imagining and interpreting the world. In this way, he considers "semantics" to be a type of science that investigates the nature and construction of worldviews in a specific historical period, which is based on the methodological analysis of the cultural concepts and ideas of that nation and is crystallized in their key words. In this way, "Quran's semantics" refers to the worldview of the Quran and the way the Quran looks at the world. That is, from the perspective of this heavenly book, how was the universe created and what are its components and how are they related to each other? With this definition, "Semantics" becomes a type of ontology, of course, ontology at the concrete level of being and existence, as reflected in the verses of the Qur'an, not a static systematic ontology that was made by a philosopher at the abstract level of metaphysical thinking. Izutsu sees his goal as "Qur'anic semantics" analytical and methodological research in major concepts that have a definite role in the formation of the Quranic attitude towards the world (Izutsu, 1361 SH, pp. 5-3). In other words, the reason for Izutsu's approach to this method of interpretation and its invention is to discover the divine meaning from the path of lexical understanding and Quranic worldview.

4-5- Analysis-Based Procedure

The reason why this procedure is called "analysis-based" is that the researcher in this procedure tries to understand the intended divine meaning analyzing the verses methodically. With the explanation that, the problem or question (in this case) is the main subject of the research. According to the nature of the question, two research methods can be imagined. The quantitative research method, in which the data is numerical and the researcher seeks to quantify the data and the relationships among them with the help of statistical methods in a large and random society. Another method of research is qualitative in which the data is textual and the researcher in a small and targeted community with analytical tools such as thematic analysis, qualitative content analysis, grounded theory (in Persian: contextual theory or data base) and etc., seeks to achieve a detailed and thorough understanding of the reasons, beliefs and motivations from the perspective of the very people of the society. The main goal of this research method

is to obtain the meanings and interpretations that the text or participants themselves make from the behavior, events or objects without the intervention of the researcher. (Monique, 2014, p. 45)

Perhaps it can be said that among all the methods of qualitative analysis, the method of "Grounded Theory", in addition to textual analysis, seeks to discover the theory, and for this reason, it has a more detailed system and a broader vision. It should be noted that the Persian term "*Nazariyeh Zaminehei*" is more closely related to the English term "Grounded Theory" in terms of vocabulary, and it indicates that any theory obtained through this method is based on a background of real data. But the Persian term "*Nazariyeh Dadeh-Bonyad*" [literally means data based theory] is more widely used among researchers (Mehrabi, 1390 SH, p. 11). "The Grounded theory" is a method in which theories, concepts, hypotheses, and theorems are discovered in a systematic process and directly from the data, without inferences from previous assumptions or other existing research or theoretical frameworks (Powell, 1999, p. 67).

"The Grounded Theory" is the process of building a documented and codified theory through the organized collection of data and their inductive analysis in order to answer new questions in fields that lack sufficient theoretical foundations to formulate any hypothesis and test it (Mansoorian, 1386 SH, p. 5). In fact, the "grounded theory" is a set of flexible methods and a process that, in addition to being used in the analysis of textual data, is effective to a large extent in understanding human behavior and identifying social processes and cultural norms. Although the grounded theory has an inductive approach, it should be noted that comparative strategies are used in the analysis of qualitative data, such as making analogical codes, analogical comparisons, etc. Therefore, the grounded theory is a combination of inductive and comparative methods (Monique, 1394 SH, p. 322).

According to what has been mentioned, the reason for the researcher's approach in this way is to use the data itself without the intervention of the researcher, which takes place in four stages of coding, categorization, conceptualization and theory generation. In fact, a researcher who uses this method to understand the Qur'an is trying to discover the perspective of the Holy Qur'an in different subjects without prior presumptions and without the intervention of external factors by collecting and organizing the information obtained from the text of the Qur'an and by using inductive and analogical analysis strategies.

5- The Results

Various categories have been presented by researchers in the thematic interpretation, among which we can mention some cases. A classification considers the subject interpretation to be divided into three bases. First, based on "religious and social beliefs, insights and tendencies". Second; based on "method", it means how the commentator deals with the subject and his perception of the thematic commentary. Third; based on "arrangement and order of themes and arrangement of verses". In another category, thematic interpretation is divided into "Qur'anic terms", "Qur'anic chapters" and "Qur'anic themes". In another categorization, the thematic interpretation is divided into "comprehensive" and "non-comprehensive".

"Non-comprehensive thematic interpretation" itself is done in two ways. In the first method, a subject is investigated in the verses of the Qur'an without considering a specific logical system, such as the books of "*Ayat al-Ahkam*" (the verses contain Sharia laws). In the second method, which is called "communicative thematic interpretation", verses related to several related themes are collected and interpreted. In another category, thematic interpretation is divided into "intra-Qur'anic", "extra-Qur'anic", "comparative" and "interdisciplinary" ways. In another classification, there are six approaches in thematic interpretation, which are: "thematic interpretation in a logical order", "thematic interpretation in the order of the *Mus'haf*" (Qur'anic manuscript), "thematic interpretation based on the structure of the surah", "thematic interpretation in the Mus'hafi-structural style", "Thematic interpretation in revelatory-structural style" and "Comprehensive thematic interpretation or semantic network of the Qur'an".

As it noted earlier, while the aforementioned categories are not organized on a single axis, they are not comprehensive and do not belong to the same category, and they do not free the researcher's mind from dispersion. For this reason, the authors (of this article) categorized the procedures mentioned in the thematic interpretation into the classes of "science-based coming from society", "method-based", "vocabulary-based" and "analysis-based" in order to organize the researcher's mind in addition to being comprehensive. What is meant by the style of "science-based thematic interpretation" is the use of different sciences in this style. Two approaches are envisaged here. In the first approach, the researcher uses the categories proposed in different sciences in organizing Quranic teachings. In the second approach, the researcher wants to discover the perspective of the Qur'an in order to complete and correct the scientific categories presented by different sciences.

In the style of "problem-based coming from society or interrogational thematic interpretation" which is founded by Shahid Al-Sadr, a specific issue from the heart of society is presented to the Qur'an and the commentator comes with the wealth of human experience in order to discover the perspective of the Qur'an. In the style of "thematic interpretation in the order of revelation or chronological interpretation", the main goal of the researcher is to discover the methods of institutionalizing Islamic values in the age of revelation and to match those methods with his contemporary era. The discovery of the divine meaning behind the lexical understanding and Qur'anic worldview is the reason for the commentator to turn to the style of "vocabulary-based thematic interpretation".

As the creator of this style, Izutsu sees his goal as "Qur'anic semantics", an analytical and methodological research in major concepts that have a definite role in the formation of the Qur'anic attitude towards the world. The reason for the researcher's approach to the style of "analysis-based thematic interpretation" is to use the data itself without the intervention of the researcher. In fact, a researcher who uses this method to understand the Qur'an is trying to discover the perspective of the Qur'an in different subjects without prior presumptions and the intervention of external factors, by collecting and organizing the information obtained from the text of the Qur'an and by using inductive and analogical analysis strategies.

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