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Being fully aware of the various viewpoints and opinions of Muslim commentators on the Qur`an who have spent their entire lives engrossed in the Qur`an, and who can rightfully be called the ‘teachers of the science of the Qur`an’ is another foundation necessary in the commentary of this Noble Book.

There is no doubt that from the first day of revelation of the Qur`an, due to the awareness of the people about the occasions of revelation and the prevalent circumstances during revelation, a great deal of the understandings of the verses were clear to them and in understanding the goals of the Qur`an, they were not in need of seeking out the viewpoints and opinions (of others).

However, due to the gap in time (between the era of the Prophet (‘s) – the revelation of the Qur`an and our time), and since those points of the history of revelation are no longer with us, we must seek assistance through the thoughts and viewpoints which would assist us in understanding the issues in regards to the history of revelation.

We must never go forth to explain the verses of the Qur`an without this in place since the thoughts and reflections of a group of people are always at a higher level than the thoughts and reflections of an individual. As we know there is a possibility of an individual falling into error in thought more so than when we reflect and review the thoughts of a group of people.

Of course, what we have just mentioned here is something other than the issue of making our own thoughts and reflections the slave of what others think and giving up the freedom of thought (on the verses of the Qur`an).

Rather, the purpose here is that in going forth in the commentary of a verse of the Qur`an, we should not be negligent of the opinions of other commentators, nor should we ignore what others have said, since it is very well possible that by referring to what others have stated, it may actually assist us in choosing an opinion and outcome or may also help us deflecting an error of judgement.

At this point, another issue must be mentioned which is that at what time in the course of the explanation of the verses of the Qur`an must a commentator refer to the other opinions concerning a particular verse of the Qur`an? Must he first review and study the various opinions in regards to a particular verse and then when he has become aware of the various opinions, puts forth his struggles and endeavors to separate the truth from falsehood? Or, would he first struggle to bring forth a commentary of his own and then after this, when he is ready to introduce his opinions, he would then refer to the beliefs and thoughts of other people (to compare his work to)?

For the novice in the field of commentary of the Qur`an, the first path is the most beneficial to take, while the person who is a well-read researcher may choose the second path.

Many times it can be seen that becoming acquainted with the opinions and viewpoints of others may actually prevent a person from going forth to conduct his own independent research and investigation (thus limiting the work of the expert).

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