Defining the Boundaries of Sacred Space: Unbelievers, Purity, and the *Masjid al-Haram* in Shi'a Exegesis of Qur'an 9:28

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Abstract

This study examines how some of the most preeminent commentators of the Shi'a exegetical tradition have interpreted Qur'an 9:28 to frame the relationship between *shirk* (associating others with God), impurity, and the confessional boundaries around Islamic sacred space, the *Masjid al-Haram* in particular. The paper revolves around three main questions: how do commentators define the boundaries of *shirk*? What is the nature of the *mushrik*'s (polytheist's) impurity? And, what is the extent of the prohibition against entering the *Masjid* and why? The paper demonstrates that commentators tend towards highly precautionary interpretations of non-Muslim impurity, including that of *ahl al-kitab*, with contrary views appearing only in the modern period. Nevertheless, despite some variance of opinion, the exegetical tradition on Qur'an 9:28 is not unique to Shi'a Islam but reflects an understanding of what counts as sacred space and how separation acts to make space sacred that is found in religion more generally.

Keywords: *najasah*; *taharah*; Qur'an 9:28; purity; impurity; Shi'a exegesis; *tafsir*; *shirk*; *mushrik*; *ahl al-kitab*; *al-Masjid al-Haram*; sacred space.

> […] God, the Blessed, the Most High, said: My beauty on earth is [in] the mosques; they light up the people of heaven as the stars light up the people of earth […] Is the servant not blessed who performs ablutions in his house and then visits me in my house? […].[1]

The relationship between purity (*taharah*) and worship, especially within the mosque, is well established in Shi'a tradition and law.[2] While the normal state of a Muslim is purity, and thus, preparedness for religious activities including worship, touching the Qur'an, or having access to the mosque, the occurrence of liquids such as urine exiting the body, or sexual intercourse, make ablution (*wudu'* for minor impurity such as the former and *ghusl* for major, such as the latter) necessary prior to any ritual activity.[3] Though frequent and literally impossible to avoid, contracting pollution is a temporary, but relatively easily restored aberration from the norm of purity, making, as Marion Katz observes, 'the alternation of purity states into a background rhythm of ritual life, one that [can] be slowed by devotional exercises such as fasting and vigils but never definitively halted.'[4]

However, legal codes surrounding purity reach beyond ritual preparedness to impact the way that community boundaries are determined and relations between Muslims and others are defined. The most ubiquitous way that purity codes define, and indeed sanctify, sociocultural boundaries is in the slaughter, purchase, and consumption of foodstuffs, particularly meat.[5] Shi 'a law identifies three categories of prohibited food: food touched with moisture by (some) non-Muslims which is then considered impure;[6] food containing something *najas* (impure), such as pork or wine; and food derived from a non-Islamically slaughtered animal (*ghayr mudhakka*).[7] In spite of these restrictions, the scripture provides maximum leniency in this matter.[8]

In contrast, as we will see throughout this paper, the scripture, and its exegesis, is less lenient in shaping the way that the purity code may regulate the relationship between non-Muslims and Muslim sacred space. Qur'an 9:28, which also lies behind the first category of prohibited food noted above, suggests the possibility that impurity may inhere in some fashion in certain classes of human beings and thereby influence the manner that sacred spatial boundaries are conceived and constructed. The text declares the imminent termination of an agreement between the Muslims, now in control of Mecca, and the *mushrikun* (often rendered 'pagans' or 'polytheists' in translation). With the termination of the agreement came the message that the *mushrikun* would henceforth be barred access to the sacred precincts of the Meccan sanctuary, the *Masjid al-Haram*. The reason given in the text for this new policy is the alleged impurity of the *mushrikun*.

> Believers, those who ascribe partners to God (*mushrikun*) are truly unclean (*najas*): do not let them come near the Sacred Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Haram*) after this year. If you are afraid you may become poor, [bear in mind that] God will enrich you out of His bounty if He pleases: God is all knowing and wise. (*Surat al-Tawbah*, 9:28)[9]

This study surveys a selection of Shi'a commentaries (*tafasir*) on this text. Shi'a opinions on the impurity of non-Muslims differ sufficiently from Sunni to merit restricting the study to the former.[10] The study asks how some of the most preeminent commentators of the Shi'a exegetical tradition have interpreted the content of the category of *mushrik* and how they have framed the relationship between *shirk* (associating others with God), impurity, and the confessional boundaries around Islamic sacred spaces, the *Masjid al-Haram* in particular. It should be noted that as is common in monotheistic traditions, the term polytheist (*mushrik* in the present context) is never neutral, but almost always understood pejoratively as the antithesis of what is accepted as the true faith.[11] There is, therefore, an express logic behind the connections made in this verse between unbelief, impurity, and sacred space. The task of this paper is to elucidate that logic from the perspective of the commentators.

In effect, I am concerned with three main questions: how do the *mufassirun* (commentators; sing., *mufassir*) define the boundaries by which a religious belief is classified as *shirk*? Does the descriptive *mushrik* apply solely to Arab polytheists or also to Jews and Christians? If the latter, how might these communities, otherwise referred to as *ahl al-kitab* (People of the Book), a designation that affirms them as followers of a revealed religion, be understood as practicing *shirk*? Secondly, how do the commentators understand the nature of the *mushrik*'s impurity (*najasah*)? Is it a strictly legal or formalistic condition occasioned by the same events that render Muslims ritually impure but that, in the case of Muslims only, is removed by ablutions? Or is it a matter of substance, in which case those who belong to the group so identified are themselves, apart from conversion to Islam, irreversibly impure? Lastly, I ask whether the proscription applies solely to the Sacred Mosque of Mecca, to the entire city of Mecca as a sacred city, or, alternatively, to all mosques generally by virtue of their universal sacrality?

The paper demonstrates that commentators tend towards highly precautionary interpretations of non-Muslim impurity, including that of *ahl al-kitab*, with contrary views appearing only in the modern period. However, unlike in the matter of purity and food consumption,[12] in which mitigating conditions can effectively neutralize a potential prohibition against consumption, no such mitigating factors can obtain in the case of sacred spatial boundaries, making a more unified position more easily obtainable. Moreover, the matter of non-Muslim impurity as it pertains to the mosque is quite different from its relevance to food consumption. From a technical perspective, the delineation of sacred spatial boundaries involves a prohibition applicable specifically to (some) non-Muslims; it does not circumscribe the actions of Muslims. On a more profound level is the matter of sacredness and its relation to place. As David Brown points out, while monotheistic traditions, Sunni Islam and Protestant Christianity most especially,

resist the supposed 'temptation to idolatry' that lurks in valuing place in its own right, the material world inevitably mediates the divine presence.[13] In this light, pollution in the sacred place, no matter its source, would create a metaphysical barrier blocking the divine presence, which is indeed an argument put forward by at least one commentator. The barring of the *mushrikun* is therefore crucial to the unfolding of the mosque's very purpose.

The paper begins with a theoretical discussion of the connection between purity and sacred space in the study of religion. I then describe the sources used in this paper in connection with the historical development of Shi'a *tafsir*, which I summarize very briefly. This is followed by a linguistic analysis of Arabic terms relating to purity and impurity and a short account of the historical context of Qur'an 9:28. The bulk of the paper examines the selected examples of *tafsir* literature, organized under three headings, which correspond to the three central questions outlined above. The paper concludes with an analytic summary of the findings of this research and some modest suggestions for understanding the conclusions in the context of religious studies' discussions on sacred space. I suggest that the notion of the incompatibility of opposites stands at the centre of Shi'a understandings of what it means for space to be sacred. And that as seen from this context, the particulars of purity and sacredness serve to give expression to a much larger vision of meaning than the details alone would suggest.

Purity and sacred space

In asking what Shi'a exegetical thought on Qur'an 9:28 tells us about the concepts of sacredness and purity in relation to place, I draw on the insights of scholars of sacred space such as David Brown, Annemarie Schimmel, F. E. Peters, and others. Brown's theory that attachment to place in human experience of the sacred is closely linked to 'the embodied character' of human creation is easily seen in the way that the body itself is conceived as a sacred space in many religions.[14] Take, for example, its place in Islamic ritual worship. As the 13th century Persian mystic Nasir al-Din put it, the body is like a house, the heart its inner chamber. Through rituals of purification, both are cleansed in preparation to welcome the Sultan – the body with physical water, the heart by the water of repentance.[15] The body and heart then together fully engage in the act of worship. The architecture of 'home' is another example of how even the secular spaces human beings build and inhabit reflect and mediate, symbolically, the metaphysical dimensions of human perceptions of reality.[16] Likewise do the various specific elements of religious buildings, individually and together, symbolize the divine presence. The Qur'anic script adorning the *kiswah* (the Ka'bah's outer covering) is an obvious example in the Islamic context. According to Brown, the lamps inside the Ka'bah burn continually, adding to the symbolism of the divine presence.[17]

But most suggestive for our purpose is how physical and metaphorical boundaries serve to instil a sense of sacredness within the enclosed space. The very word sacred, *sanctus*, derived from the word *sancire*, meaning 'to limit' or 'to enclose', Annemarie Schimmel tells us, suggests the notion of 'making sacred by separation'.[18] Closely related to this idea, the term *haram*, as in *Masjid al-Haram*, signifies at once the dual notion of sacred and forbidden. Meaning to make 'unlawful, forbidden, prohibited',[19] the verb *harrama* identifies certain behaviours, as well as persons, places, times, or objects (especially certain foods) as 'taboo'. For example, Qur'an 2:173: 'He has forbidden you carrion (*maytah*), blood, the meat of swine (*lahm al-khinzir*), and whatever has been consecrated to other than God […].' In its essential meaning, taboo carries the idea of setting apart as sacred and unapproachable, thus referring simultaneously to what belongs to the divine realm and to the forbidden.[20] As Toshihiko Isutzu observes, in its connection to taboo, *haram* refers not only to 'an action punishable by law', but also to the sacred state of heightened ritual purity (*ihram*) required of those who make the pilgrimage.[21]

Shi'a *tafsir*: an historical overview

As Diana Steigerwald states in the *Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, the most important distinction between Shi'a and Sunni *tafsir* is the central role of the infallible Imam in Shi'a thought.[22] Since only the Prophet's descendants through 'Ali and Fatimah possess true religious knowledge, enabling them to 'uncover the *batin* [underlying meaning] from the *zahir* [apparent meaning]', their authority to interpret the Qur'an is paramount.[23] Hence, among many others, the well-known prophetic tradition known as *hadith al-thaqalayn* (the *hadith* of two weighty matters): 'I have left among you two weighty matters which if you cling to them you shall not be led into error after me. One of them is greater than the other: The Book of God which is a rope stretched from Heaven to Earth and my progeny, the people of my house. These two shall not be parted until they return to the pool [of Paradise].' This tradition, existing in different versions of *isnad* (chain of transmitters) and *matn* (text), is included in Sunni and Shi'a canonical *hadith* collections. Meir M. Bar-Asher points out that Sunnis accept a version in which the second weighty matter is identified as the prophet's practice (*sunnat nabiyyihi* [sic]), whereas Shi'as identify it, as stated here, as the prophet's descendants from 'Ali and Fatimah.[24] According to Bar-Asher, al-Tusi (d. 1067) explains the logic of the Shi'a perspective as being consistent with the implication that the latter weight will be 'present in every generation', which, the Shi'as believe, is true only of the Imams.[25]

Given the crucial role of the infallible Imam in Shi'a doctrine, the major occultation of the twelfth Imam (941 CE) marks the point of transition from commentaries consisting exclusively of the sayings of the Imams (*tafsir bi al-ma'thur*) to those to those allowing for more extensive expression of the views of the commentators, such as *tafsir al-Qur'an bi al-Qur'an* or grammatical *tafsir*. Though as pointed out by Bruce Fudge, the line is somewhat artificial as the sayings continue to be cited in later commentaries.[26] A second shift occurred in the 11th century when Imami exegetes turned from a preoccupation with defending Shi'a doctrines, especially the Imamate, to interpreting the entirety of the Qur'an.[27] Shi'a commentaries of this period and beyond share with their Sunni counterparts an interest in explicating the full legal and theological meaning of the text by means of variant readings, grammar, philology, pronunciation, and orthography.[28] The third major shift, occurring around the same time, was from the rejection of the 'Uthmani codex of the Qur'an by the first generation of exegetes to the more moderate views of the pillars of mediaeval Shi'a thought, al-Mufid (d. 1022), al-Murtada (d. 1044), and al-Tusi (d. 1067), and then succeeding generations of Shi'a exegetes, who accepted the 'Uthmanic codex, while offering a specifically Shi'a interpretation of the text.[29]

These shifts make outlining the history of Shi'a exegesis relatively straightforward and there is wide coherence between scholars in this regard. Steigerwald's framework may be taken as representative. The first generation, whose commentaries are no longer extant, consists of those who acquired their knowledge directly from the Imams.[30] The second generation includes those who compiled the sayings of the Imams on the meaning of select portions of the Qur'an without additional comment. These include commentators such as 'Ali Ibrahim al-Qummi (d. 307/919-920) and Muhammad al-Ayyashi (d. 319/932). As those of their works that are available to me do not discuss Qur'an 9:28, I have not included them in the present study.[31] Steigerwald identifies the third and fourth stages of Imami *tafsir* as the mediaeval and modern periods respectively. This paper examines a representative sample of the most influential Shi'a exegetes spanning these two major periods.

The sources

I have selected nine commentators in total, six and three from the mediaeval and modern periods respectively. For purposes of this paper, the mediaeval period may be subdivided into three parts: the first generation of comprehensive *tafsir*, comprising Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan at-Tusi (Shaykh al-Ta'ifah) (d. 460/1067) and Fadl ibn Hasan Tabarsi (or Tabrisi, d. 1153) constitute the first subdivision;[32] al-Miqdad al-Hilli (d. 826/1423), whose full name is given as al-Miqdad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad

ibn al-Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Suyuri al-Hilli al-Asadi, bridges this early and later mediaeval, or Safavid, period; three Safavid commentators, namely Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Ardabili, known as al-Muqaddas al-Ardabili (d. 993/1585), Mulla Fath Allah ibn Mulla Shukr Allah Kashani (d. 988/1580), and Muhammad ibn Murtada Fayd al-Kashani (d. 1090/1680 or 81) complete the mediaeval period.[33] Three modern exegetes, Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah (d. 1979), 'Allamah Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i (d. 1981), and Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah (d. 2010), round off the list of commentators.

Bar-Asher cites al-Tusi and al-Tabarsi as the most outstanding of their generation.[34] The former lived during the period dubbed the 'Shi'i century' (940-1055).[35] He left his home in Tus to study in Baghdad under Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Nu'man (al-Mufid), 'the most noted Shi'i scholar and jurisconsult (*faqih*) of his day.'[36] After al-Mufid's death in 1022, al-Tusi continued his studies under al-Mufid's illustrious student, al-Sharif al-Murtada (d. 1044). Although a major collector of Shi'i *hadith* and a specialist in comparative Islamic law, al-Tusi also made a tremendous contribution to other fields of Islamic sciences, including *tafsir*.[37] His major work of *tafsir*, *al-Tibyan fi al-Tafsir al-Qur'an*, is recognized as 'the first comprehensive work of Imami exegesis'[38] and became a valuable resource for subsequent Shi'i commentators. It follows the format of regular, rather than legal *tafsir*, moving verse by verse through the entire Qur'an, without, however, arranging his material in periscopes. This has the advantage of generating detail on each verse and the disadvantage of not providing the reader with ready access to his larger interpretive structure. This study looks at al-Tusi's views on ritual purity as found in his *al-Nihayah* in translation, and relies on *al-Tibyan* for his exegesis of Qur'an 9:28.

Al-Tabarsi lived in the post-Shi'i century, during the period of the Sunni Saljuq dynasty. Fudge notes that Twelver Shi'as were in good relationship with the Saljuqs, many having been given positions in government.[39] Al-Tabarsi himself was well regarded for his knowledge and piety. According to Fudge, he was 'a major figure' in 'the network of Imami scholarship', the best known of his many writings being three works of *tafsir*.[40] The sources used in the present paper are his *Majma' al-Bayan fil 'Ulum al-Qur'an* and *Mukhtasar Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, an abridged version of the first cited ten volume work, completed over a period of six years. According to Fudge, the work uses both Sunni and Shi'a sources and follows in al-Tusi's groundbreaking steps in providing a comprehensive exegesis of the entire Qur'an, including all relevant scholarly opinions, grammar, and the full range of Islamic sciences.[41]

The *nisbah* of the 14th-15th century commentator, al-Miqdad al-Hilli, recalls a major centre of Islamic learning during the Seljuq period, situated between Kufa and Baghdad.[42] According to Rula Abisaab, the school of al-Hillah also made a considerable impact on the growth of Shi'a learning in Lebanon's Jabil 'Amil, an influence that went back as early as the 10th or 11th century.[43] By the late 15th century, Abisaab notes, the Jabil 'Amil region had become the 'the foremost center for Shi'a learning'.[44] Al-Miqdad wrote a commentary, entitled *Kitab al-Nafi Yawm al-Hashar fi Sharh Bab al-Hadi 'Ashar*, on the more famous 'Allamah al-Hilli's (d. 1325) *al-Bab al-Hadi 'Ashar*, the latter considered the most authentic compendium of Shi'a doctrine. The text used in this paper is his *tafsir*, *Kanz al-'Irfan fi Fiqh al-Qur'an*. As a legal commentary, it treats only legal verses and is arranged by topic, parallel to the arrangement in works of *fiqh*.[45] Qur'an 9:28 sits within the chapter on *taharah*. McAuliffe notes that this work 'gained an early and enduring reputation' for Miqdad,[46] and was influential on later commentators such as the great Safavid scholar, al-Muqaddas al-Ardabili.

Al-Muqaddas al-Ardabili lived during the period of Shi'a reform in Safavid Persia. The reform was inaugurated by Shah Tahmasp I to eradicate the extremism of his Shi'i Safavid predecessors.[47] It was during this period that Twelver Shi'ism as we know it today took shape and the framework for its authority structure was put in place.[48] Al-Ardabili's commentary, also on legal verses, is entitled *Zubdat al-Bayan fi Ahkam al-Qur'an*. McAuliffe notes its indebtedness to Miqdad's *tafsir*.[49] The second Safavid scholar, Mulla Fath Allah Kashani, lived during the same period as al-Ardabili. According to McAuliffe,

little is known about this individual. In McAuliffe's own summary of biographical notes concerning him, she notes that he wrote three exegetical works, *Minhaj al-Sadiqin fi Ilzam al-Mukhalifin*, which is included in this study, and an abridged version of the same, both written in Persian. His third commentary, *Zubdat al-Tafsir*, which is not available to me, was written in Arabic.[50] The third Safavid scholar included in this survey died in 1090/1680 or 81, towards the end of Safavid rule. He is identified as Muhammad ibn Murtada Fayd al-Kashani (or al-Kashi). A prolific author, he was an Akhbari *hadith* scholar, famous primarily for his works on philosophical mysticsm (*'irfan*),[51] though he has at least one work of *tafsir*, entitled *Tafsir al-Safi*. In it, he treats Qur'an 9:28 in just one paragraph.

The first of our modern exegetes, Muhammad Mughniyyah, was born in 1904 to a poor Shi'i family in southern Lebanon, and orphaned at the age of 10. He eventually arrived at Najaf in southern Iraq, where, in his early 20s, still suffering the hardships of his youth, he began his studies in religion. Mughniyyah returned to Lebanon where, as a religious teacher in a southern village, he witnessed the injustice of the Lebanese political system. His opportunity to advance socio-political change came when, from 1948 to 1956, he was a high-ranking judge in the shari'ah court in Beirut.[52] In the final decades of his life, Mughniyyah's political thought continued to take shape in response to Ayatollah Khomeini's notion of w*ilayat al-faqih* (guardianship of the jurisconsult), in comparison to which he advocated a 'more restrained' political role for the contemporary Shi'i jurist.[53] His commentary, entitled *al-Tafsir al-Kashif*, introduces some novel interpretations of Qur'an 9:28.

'Allamah Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i is arguably among the most learned and influential of the modern Shi'a *mufassirun*. Born in 1903 in Tabriz, he pursued his advanced religious education in Najaf, returning to Iran in 1934 to eventually make his home in Qum, where he taught *tafsir* and *'irfan* (philosophical mysticism) until his death in 1982. Tabataba'i's writings range from *'irfan*, *fiqh*, the Qur'an and related issues, to 'current religious and philosophical debates',[54] some of which have been translated into English.[55] His interest in comparative religion centred on mysticism and he met regularly in Tehran with Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Henri Corbin 'to study the classics of mysticism'.[56] His Qur'an commentary, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* (*The [Justly Held] Scales in the Interpretation of the Qur'an*), comprising several volumes and including the views of classical and modern, and Sunni and Shi'i commentators, is directed towards young Shi'i intellectuals and encompasses 'philosophical, sociological, and traditional viewpoints'.[57]

Considered progressive by some observers, Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah has had a large following among Shi'a youth. Born in Iraq of Lebanese parents, he received his title *marja' al-taqlid* (source of emulation) in 1986 from Ayatollah Khomeini, whose religiously inspired political activism moved the younger Fadlullah.[58] The latter was seen as a spiritual guide of the Lebanese and international Hizbollah (Party of God), but in the last two decades before his death in 2010 he kept a low profile in political affairs. Fadlullah advocates a particularly energetic use of *ijtihad* in the interpretation and application of Islamic law which is evident in the work examined here. Like Tabataba'i, Fadlullah was a prolific writer. He was particularly concerned with Muslim-non-Muslim relations; for instance, he has a small publication entitled *Uslub al-Da'wah fi al-Qur'an* (*Methods of Missionary Activity in the Qur'an*).[59] The source used for this study is his multi-volume *tafsir*, entitled *Min Wahy al-Qur'an*.

Impurity, unbelief, and immorality: a linguistic analysis

The 3-letter Arabic root *n-j-s* from which *najasah* (impurity) and the gerund (*masdar*) *najas* (impure) are derived appears in the Qur'an only once, in Qur'an 9:28, in its *masdar* form (*najas*). In contrast, the root *t-h-r* appears in a variety of verb forms, or as a gerund, 31 times.[60] In all but one case,

the text refers to people that have been or will be purified; who are called upon to purify themselves or something else, such as God's house, the Ka'bah; or who are commended for keeping themselves pure.[61] Where the word *najas* appears, it is, in contrast, a declaration of impurity particular to a class of people that the Qur'an terms *mushrik* and that does not appear to envision the possibility of purification. In analysing the word *najas*, the exegetes tend to emphasize the comprehensiveness of the word's semantics. For example, exemplifying the grammatical exegesis characteristic of the mediaeval and later period of *tafsir*, al-Tabarsi and Miqdad use the same language, repeated later by Tabataba'i and Mughniyyah, to argue that because *najas* is a *masdar*, it involves no gender or number definitions. Rather, it is to be understood as a general categorization of a class of people identified by their state of impurity.[62]

Used in jurisprudence, *najas* becomes an abstract noun with three different forms of expression: *al-najasah al-haqiqiyyah*, *al-najasah al-hukmiyyah*, and *al-najasah* with no further qualifiers. According to the author of the modern handbook, *al-Ta'rifat al-Fiqhiyyah*, *al-najasah* without qualification is the same as *janabah* and *junub*, that is, the state of being affected by ritual impurity due to the expulsion of semen or for similar reasons.[63] Likewise *al-najasah al-hukmiyyah* refers to the two types of ritual impurity, major (*al-hadath al-akbar*) and minor (*al-hadath al-asghar*), for which *ghusl* and *wudu'* (major and minor ablutions) respectively are required before any religious activity can be performed. *Al-najasah al-haqiqiyyah* (often termed *najas al-'ayn*),[64] on the other hand, refers to something that is unclean or impure by its own nature, such as wine or shed blood, carrion, or urine, and the like. As such, it is equivalent to *al-khabith* (anything the shari'ah considers unclean or filthy), and virtually the same as *qadhar*, which is anything that violates cleanliness, such as excrement.[65] These terms appear from time to time in the commentators' discussions on Qur'an 9:28.

In referring to impurity, the Qur'an itself uses the word *rijs* far more frequently than it does *najas*.[66] Although on the surface *rijs* is applied to impure substances such as wine, carrion, pork, and urine (among other things), *rijs* is better understood as indicative of impurity as a moral category, closely connected to unbelief. A key verse for *rijs*, Qur'an 5:90 – 'O you who believe, wine (implying any alcoholic beverage) and games of chance (*al-maysir*) and idols and divining arrows are a filth (*rijs*) of Satan's doing, so avoid it so that you may succeed' – shows the close association between moral evil, uncleanness, and divine prohibition. The association with idolatry is made clearer in Qur'an 22:30 and 9:125, where the obstinate worship of idols in spite of the divine Revelation is said to accumulate *rijs*. The term's moral current is further underlined in Qur'an 9:95, which identifies 'wrong-doing folk' (*al-qawm al-fasiqin*) as *rijs*.[67] The same concept is also found in several other verses, such as Qur'an 10:100: 'It is not for anyone to believe except by the permission of God. And he has appointed filth (*al-rijs*) upon those who have not understanding.'[68] Impurity and purity in Qur'anic vocabulary are also conceptually associated with prohibition and permission. The most common Qur'anic words denoting moral filth are derived from the root *kh-b-th* (see *al-khabith* above), the antonym of *tayyib* which carries the notion of pleasant and typically refers to permitted foods, among other things.[69] The pair is parallel to the legal terminology that divides the world into things forbidden (*haram*) and permitted (*halal*) respectively.

This analysis demonstrates that Qur'anic terminology of impurity reflects a strong moral current and is suggestive of a categorical incompatibility between faith and its works on the one hand and unbelief and its practices on the other. By including unbelief within the conceptual and legal framework of purity and impurity, Isutzu notes, the Qur'an 'creates, as it were, a new moral and spiritual conception of taboo, and gives an ethical content to the primitive idea of *haram*, by placing 'under taboo' various manifestations of *kufr*' (unbelief).[70] Fadlullah's interpretation of unbeliever impurity, as will be seen below, appears to draw from this Qur'anic moral and metaphysical frame of reference.

Historical context of Qur'an 9:28

The earliest extant biography of the Prophet tells us that Surah 9, al-Tawbah, was revealed in year 9 of the *hijrah*,[71] the conquest of Mecca having occurred in the previous year.[72] The events of Surah 9 took place, al-Tusi specifies, just prior to the Farewell Pilgrimage.[73] In volume 9 of his voluminous *History*, al-Tabari narrates an account of a lengthy series of Arab tribal deputations who visited the Prophet during this year to offer an oath of allegiance to him and/or to negotiate terms of agreement.[74] While some requested permission to retain their idol, *al-Lat*, for a period of time, the Prophet refused to compromise, except that he did not require them to demolish their idols with their own hands.[75] Some of the pagan Arabs nevertheless continued to oppose the Prophet deceitfully, twelve men among them even building an 'opposition mosque' in order to 'cause division among believers'.[76] Thus, although the period in which al-Tawbah was revealed was primarily a time of the growth and consolidation of Muslim power in the Peninsula, opposition continued, though not as overtly as in the past.

According to Ibn Ishaq and al-Tabari, the verse was revealed and 'Ali sent to deliver it to a group of 300 men who had, under Abu Bakr's leadership, set out on pilgrimage to Mecca. 'Ali was asked to read 'the declaration of dispensation (*al-bara'ah*) on the day of sacrifice at al-'Aqaba'.[77] The event, referred to also in verse 1 of Surah 9, provides the Surah's alternative name, al-Bara'ah, the dispensation from God and the Prophet, or the 'declaration of immunity', delivered on the Day of Sacrifice.[78] The announcement gave the polytheists till the termination of the then valid treaty at the end of the year, some four months of immunity, before all treaty relations with Arab polytheists would cease and the latter would be denied access to the sacred precincts of the Ka'bah, the *Masjid al-Haram*; likewise, they would be forbidden to 'circumambulate the House naked'.[79] Several commentators provide the same narrative, making frequent reference to Imami traditions cited by al-Ayyashi and al-Qummi. Al-Tabari offers the detail that 'Ali made sure that everyone, in all their settlements, heard the announcement. According to F. E. Peters, the message signalled a 'momentous change in the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims',[80] a symbolic yet potent gesture consolidating Muslim control over the city and its central shrine and marking the newly victorious religion's 'final break with paganism'.[81] That the announcement is articulated in terms of ritual impurity alludes to the community's developing sense of religious identity.

Determining the boundaries of *shirk*: Jews, Christians, and the *mushrikun*

In her article entitled 'Legal Exegesis: Christians as a Case Study', Jane McAuliffe focuses on Qur'an 9:28 in two of five commentaries treated, suggesting that these commentators understand the term *mushrikun* as including Christians as a referent.[82] But not all commentators address this question.[83] Fayd al-Kashani, for example, does not discuss whether the prohibition is addressed to other than the Meccan polytheists. The context of his discussion would suggest that he is more interested in underlining the change of policy announced by the revelation.[84] Al-Tusi provides variant views on the identity of *mushrikun*, appearing to settle on the view of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz (r. 717-720), earlier expressed by al-Tabari. According to the latter, Ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz ordered that Jews and Christians be forbidden entry to 'the mosques of the Muslims' on account of the divine pronouncement that 'the *mushrikun* are *najas*.'[85] On the other hand, al-Tabari cites a number of sources claiming that as *ahl al-dhimmah* (people of the protective pact) and *ahl al-jizyah* (people of the head tax), Jews and Christians were to be distinguished from the *mushrikun*.[86] Al-Tusi accepts the view that Jews and Christians belong to the category of *mushrikun* and explains his position with reference to the alleged ambiguity of their monotheism. Even though the Jews of his day may deny compromising monotheism, he says, they did not do so when the revelation accusing them of calling Ezra the son of God came in Qur'an 9:30:

> The Jews said, 'Ezra is the son of God,' and the Christians said, 'The Messiah is the son of God': they said this with their own mouths, repeating what earlier disbelievers had said. May God confound them! How far astray they have been led!

Furthermore, he argues, it is a case of generalizing from the particular. What is spoken or left un-denied by some Jews applies to all of them generally.[87]

According to al-Tusi, the Jews and Christians are *mushrikun* also because in taking 'as lords besides God their rabbis and monks' (Qur'an 9:31), 'they obey prohibitions and permissions contrary to what God has commanded.'[88] The argument is repeated by Miqdad al-Hilli, who argues that all *kuffar* are equally impure, and this means not only qualitatively, that is, that they are impure in and of themselves (*najas al-'ayn*), but also quantitatively; that is, all non-Muslims are *najas al-'ayn*, including, contrary to the view of al-Mufid and others, *ahl al-dhimmah*.[89] As does al-Tusi, Miqdad substantiates his position with reference to verses 30 and 31 of Surah 9. Further, for al-Tusi, the *mushrikun* are defined not solely by their worship of other gods but also by their making lawful what God has forbidden. This broadens the category of *kuffar* to include those who follow a law other than shari'ah.[90] By all accounts, then, according to al-Tusi and Miqdad al-Hilli, Jews and Christians are guilty of *shirk* and are therefore included amongst those considered impure.

Likewise does al-Ardabili include Jews and Christians among the impure *mushrikun*. He is of the opinion that all those who are not *muwahhidun* (believing in the unity of God) are *mushrikun*, and this includes the People of the Book. He quotes the beginning of verse 9:30, for God has said that 'the Jews say that Ezra is the son of God and the Christians say Christ is the son of God,' and follows it up with the last part of verse 31, 'May God be exalted above all that they associate (*yushrikun*) [with Him].' Thus, al-Ardabili affirms that the Qur'an establishes all non-Muslims as impure.[91]

Among the modern commentators reviewed here, Tabataba'i is closest to the commentators of the past. His discussion of Qur'an 9:28 closes a section beginning at verse 25. Apart from quoting numerous Shi'a traditions unrelated to the issue of impurity, he treats verse 28 in but one page. Regarding whether the verse applies to Jews and Christians, he is silent, but one can extrapolate from his very extensive discussion of verses 29-34. We are interested particularly in verses 30-31, quoted above. Recalling al-Tusi's argument expressed above, Tabataba'i explains that the Qur'an's censure applies to all Jews generally. Secondly, he contends that the 'sonship' attributed to Ezra is different than the Christian belief in the 'sonship' of Jesus. The former is a matter of expressing honour for an individual who reassembled the Torah and revived the religion of the Jews after the Persian king, Cyrus, permitted their return from exile. Though mistaken, it is not as serious a violation of the unity of God as the Christian's belief in Jesus as the son of God.[92] The latter is within the parameters of what the Qur'an would call *kufr* and idolatry, as it finds expression in the alleged Christian 'trinity' of 'God the father, God the son, and God the mother of God or God's wife', an idea that the Christians borrowed from 'the idolaters of India, China, and ancient Egypt.'[93] This is how the Christians have mimicked (*yudahi'un*) the idolatry of the past, especially of Buddhism, many stories of which, Tabataba'i avers, unnamed researchers have identified in the Gospels.[94]

The second and related way that Jews and Christians violate true monotheism is by obeying their rabbis and teachers as 'lords' in place of God. Such unquestioning obedience to religious leaders should be defined, he says, as worship. Whereas, the Qur'an calls Christians and Jews to join with Muslims in worshiping none but God and in not ascribing partners to him (*wa la nushrik bihi shay'an*),[95] for the Christians' 'saying that the Messiah is lord is a form of *shirk*.'[96] Finally, he ties this to the start of the Qur'anic text addressing those who do not believe in God or the last day, alleging that they are the same people who are addressed in the above. It would appear, therefore, that by his own argument, Tabataba'i would have to include Christians and Jews within the category of impure *mushrik*s. What type of impurity they are described by is discussed below.

Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah and Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah are the first commentators to depart from the general opinion on the classification of Jews and Christians that we have seen so far. Mughniyyah's exegesis is very explicit in defining the *mushrikun* and distinguishing them from Jews and Christians. Although he begins his exegesis of Qur'an 9:28 with the same grammatical notations as his predecessors, Mughniyyah employs other arguments that lead him to rather different conclusions. Like the classical scholars, Mughniyyah defines *najas* as synonymous with *qadhar* and classifies it as a *masdar*, thus identifying a class of people not subject to particularizing features such as gender and number, or, one might deduce, individual character. The word is intended to be understood inclusively and generally.[97]

However, Mughniyyah observes that the Qur'an uses the word *mushrikun* to refer consistently to those, especially Arabs, who quite literally worship idols. When Jews and Christians are intended, it uses the phrase *ahl al-kitab*.[98] Mughniyyah develops his thesis further with a grammatical analysis of Qur'an 2:105 and Qur'an 98:1, where both terms, *mushrikun* and *ahl al-kitab* are used.[99] He argues that in general when two things are mentioned individually and joined by a conjunction, the one does not usually mean the other. The only way that this might be the case is when the lesser or smaller (*ahl al-kitab*, for example) is a particular instance of the larger, more general term (*mushrikun*), but this requires some connecting reason (*walakin ma'a al-qarinah*) which, it seems, Mughniyyah does not find here.[100] Contrary to Izutsu's judgment that the Qur'an treats Christian Trinitarian doctrine as *shirk* – an expression of *kufr*,[101] as Tabataba'i and the mediaeval commentators aver – Mughniyyah's interpretation suggests that the beliefs of *ahl al-kitab* belong not in the semantic field of *kufr* but of *iman* (faith). As Izutsu's study suggests is proper to the semantics of the Qur'an, Mughniyyah uses the terms *mushrik* and *kafir* interchangeably, but considers them to be clearly distinct from the term *ahl al-kitab*. Thus, according to his exegesis, the verse does not apply to the People of the Book.

Like Mughniyyah, Fadlullah places Jews and Christians within the semantic field of *iman*, categorically removing them from the classification of *mushrik*. Although, Fadlullah argues, Jews and Christians have corrupted their original revelations by erroneously attributing divinity to Ezra and Jesus respectively, they may be excused, perhaps, for simply taking their admiration and respect for these individuals too far. In other words, it may be that it is not actually a matter of doctrine (similar to Tabataba'i's view), but of exaggeration or extremism (*ghuluw*) in practice only.[102] Their belief in one God, in contrast, *is* a doctrinal certainty, a point that allies them with Muslims with respect to their faith, 'spirituality, thinking, and codes of behaviour in practical social life.'[103] In contrast to the beliefs of *mushrik*s, as we will see below, according to Fadlullah, the moral and spiritual world of *ahl al-kitab*, far from being characterized by impurity, is in fact extremely compatible with that of Muslims.[104]

Exegeting *najas*: defining the impurity of the *mushrikun*

While classical and mediaeval commentators tend to agree that Jews and Christians belong to the category of *mushrikun*, they are less unified in their opinions on the nature of the *mushrik*'s impurity. As discussed above, unbelievers may be afflicted by one or both of two types of *najasah*: *al-najasah al-hukmiyyah* (legal impurity) or *al-najasah al-haqiqiyyah* (actual impurity). As noted above, the former afflicts Muslims as well as non-Muslims as it follows from contact with something belonging to the latter or by an ordinary bodily 'event' (*hadath*) such as urinating or having sexual relations, and may likewise be termed ritual impurity in that it prevents the performance of a religious act until ablutions restore one to a state of ritual purity. Since *mushrikun* do not perform ablutions, they remain, at least tentatively, in a state of impurity. However, if the *mushrik*'s impurity is *haqiqiyyah*, nothing but conversion to Islam can resolve the issue.

For al-Tusi, what makes the *mushrikun* unclean is their *shirk*, and regarding physical contact with such (such as shaking hands on which there is moisture) the law requires Muslims to perform ritual ablutions 'without fail (*wa lam yafsal*)'.[105] Al-Tusi uses the word *qadhar* (filth) here, rather than *najasah*, which, as we saw above, has been defined as something polluting, a substance that is in itself impure. At the same time, al-Tusi sees the *mushrikun*'s uncleanness as stemming from the fact that they do not perform ritual washing after *janabah*,[106] a condition that is 'socially harmless' in that it does not prohibit the affected person from ordinary social intercourse, but solely from ritual activity.[107]

Thus, the logic of al-Tusi's exegesis would be that since the Jews and Christians, like *mushrik*s, do not perform *wudu'*, they are not in the state of purity required for ritual worship and must therefore be prohibited access to the mosque whose primary purpose is the worship of God. As straightforward as this seems, it complicates al-Tusi's argument noted above that the effective cause of the impurity of non-Muslims – Jews, Christians, and pagans – is their associating of others as lords besides God (*shirk*). The ablution argument effectively makes the whole discussion of belief redundant; for if all the *mushrikun* need do to be pure is to perform ablutions, *shirk* effectively has no direct relationship to impurity. Later exegetes pick up on this problem and focus their arguments on belief, not failure to perform ablutions, as the effective cause of impurity. As we will see, the argument from belief, though sharing the fundamental premise that idolatry and divine association (*shirk*) are characterized by impurity, translates into two rather different conclusions.

In defining the impurity of the *mushrikun*, al-Tabarsi grants that there is disagreement among the *fuqaha'* (jurists/legal scholars; sing: *faqih*). He offers three possible interpretations. Some say they are *najas al-'ayn*, that is, they are impure in and of themselves, so that if a Muslim were to shake the hand of a *kafir* he would be obliged to perform *wudu'*. He cites Imami traditions in support of this opinion. Secondly, others have said that the impurity of the *mushrikun* derives from 'the filth of their beliefs, their deeds, and their sayings.'[108] Thirdly, he quotes the Sunni commentator Qatadah, who defines the impurity of the *mushrikun* as the consequence of not performing *ghusl* (major ablutions) after *janabah*, or *wudu'* after *hadath* (minor impurity). While not absolutely clear, al-Tabarsi's own interpretation indicates that he prefers the first option, as he prohibits non-Muslims not merely from being present where Muslims worship, but from any contact with them whatsoever. The impurity of the *mushrik* would therefore be 'dangerous' in the same way as are unclean animals such as dogs and pigs.

Miqdad al-Hilli's interpretation leaves no room for ambiguity and contrasts strikingly with that of al-Tusi, nearly four centuries earlier. Miqdad's lack of ambiguity may be attributed to the fact that his is a legal commentary given to deriving *ahkam* (legal rulings; sing. *hukm*). Likely for the same reason, Miqdad is also more thorough in his argumentation, providing contrary views and refuting them with sound reasoning and *hadith* of *ahl al-bayt* (the Shi'as). Using the very same words as al-Tabarsi, Miqdad sees the use of the numberless and gender-neutral *masdar* as indicating that the state of *najasah* applies to non-believers as a class.[109] And, to ensure that his readers are not left with any misunderstanding, Miqdad states frankly, 'The *mushrikun* are impure with a corporeal [or material, substantial] impurity, not legal... [*najasah 'ayniyyah, la hukmiyyah*].'[110] Of course, if they are materially impure, they are also legally impure. The point is they are not *merely* legally impure. He goes on to explain that their very beings are impure, 'as dogs and pigs'.[111] They themselves, then, are the substance that makes them *najas*.

The point is repeated by al-Ardabili, who, on the basis of language and tradition, demonstrates that the only interpretation warranted by the text is that the *najasah* of the *mushrikun* is essential (*najasah 'ayniyyah*).[112] That is, they themselves are the substance that is impure, 'just as are dogs and pigs'.[113] However, it is also what he terms metaphorical (*'ala wajih al-majaz*), a term that suggests that, as al-Ardabili sees it, their impurity derives specifically from their *shirk*-like beliefs, which is of the same status as *najasah*, and not, as may be supposed, from the fact that they do not perform *wudu'* or *ghusl*

after *janabah*. That they are impure in this circumstantial way is only in addition to the impurity that is theirs internally, or actually, because of *shirk*. In other words, the impurity that derives from beliefs, as opposed to *janabah*, is identified as metaphorical, which is, however, for al-Ardabili, no less actual for that reason. It follows, naturally, that their impurity cannot be removed by washing.

Thus, Miqdad and al-Ardabili agree almost line for line that the *najasah* attributed to the *mushrikun* is comprehensive in two ways. Impurity is their identifying mark, firstly, in that there are no impure people apart from them;[114] and secondly, so fully impure are they that there is no other way to describe them – '*laysa lahum wasaf illa al-najasah*.'[115] For al-Ardabili, the plain meaning of Qur'an 9:28 is that the *mushrik* has no attribute but that of *najasah*, or *qadhar* (whatever violates cleanliness, such as excrement), and, again, there is no other way to describe them. According to al-Ardabili, the only way one may speak of purity in relation to the *mushrikun* is to say that they have none. [116]

As already noted, Miqdad's interpretation is based largely on grammatical analysis. After repeating Qatadah's argument, offered earlier by al- Tabarsi, Miqdad refutes it, saying that the language indicates that the impurity of the *mushrikun* has nothing to do with not performing *wudu'* or not avoiding impure substances. Indeed, they cannot avoid such substances, he says, for they themselves are the impure substance that is prohibited from Muslim places of worship. To emphasize the point further, he says that 'if they washed their bodies seventy times, they would not add anything [to themselves] except impurity.'[117] This is supported, he adds, by *riwayat* of *ahl al-bayt* (Shi'a narrations/*ahadith*; sing: *riwayah*).[118]

Miqdad concludes that since they are impure, everything they touch with wetness acquires impurity. Miqdad counters *Surat al-Ma'idah* (5) verse 5, which appears to make the food of the *ahl al-kitab* permissible to Muslims, by arguing that it refers only to grains and other dry foodstuffs, as al-Ayyashi shows in his *tafsir*.[119] The verse is not intended to suggest the purity of the *ahl al-kitab*, nor of all of their food, such as pork. Likewise, for al-Ardabili, anything that touches unbelievers or their food with moisture becomes polluted and if anyone thinks that the Qur'an's saying 'the food of those to whom the Book is given is permitted for you' contradicts this, al-Ardabili says, there is a *riwayah* to clarify that this refers only to dry foods such as grains.[120] The same rule applies to the *kafir*.[121]

While less dogmatic than either Miqdad or al-Ardabili, Fath Allah Kashani likewise agrees that the *mushrik*'s *najasah* is descriptive of their 'inward being' (*batinihim*),[122] suggesting that they are impure in and of themselves. Yet he uses the legal term *khabith* (anything the *shari'ah* considers unclean or filthy) to describe the quality of their impurity. In *Minhaj al-Sadiqin*, Kashani explains that the *mushrik's* impurity is due to the uncleanness (*na paki*) of their beliefs. Or, he says, it is possible that it may be due to their lack of avoiding or not washing after *janabah*.[123] After noting that the four Sunni schools consider their *najasah* to be legal (*najas al-hukm*) and not actual (*najas al-'ayn*), Kashani says that the majority of Shi'i scholars consider it to be essential or actual impurity, such as the impurity attached to dogs. He is in agreement with the latter view because the apparent or outer meaning of the verse suggests to him that this is the case (*va zahir-i ayih dall ast bar in*). He also says that it is confirmed by the statement of Hasan al-Basri (d. 728),[124] asserting that shaking hands with a *mushrik* requires *wudu'*.[125]

This survey demonstrates a strong tendency amongst classical and pre-modern exegetes to define *najasah* as something inhering in the very nature of unbelievers, which is due to their *shirk*-like beliefs. It is not simply a matter of being ritually prohibited from worship due to a failure to perform ablutions; rather, unbelievers are themselves understood as a substance that has the potential to render a Muslim or a Muslim place of worship ritually impure. Moreover, the more common opinion is that because Christians and Jews share in *shirk*-like beliefs, they too should be considered *mushrik*s and thus amongst the

intended addressees of the verse. Are these views carried forward into the modern period? To address this question, we return to the interpretations of Mughniyyah, Tabataba'i, and Fadlullah.

Tabataba'i's exegesis of verse 28 begins with an exact replication of the *masdar* argument introduced by al-Tabarsi and repeated by Miqdad al-Hilli and others, including, as seen above, Mughniyyah.[126] In other words, the word is intended to be understood inclusively and generally. It may be fair to say that the *masdar* factor is in fact a determining element of the commentary tradition on this question well into the modern period, delineating a group of people irrevocably defined by the quality of *najasah*. While this lends support to the view that *najasah* is an intrinsic characteristic of the *mushrikun*, as we will see, this is not necessarily a foregone conclusion for all commentators. Tabataba'i is vague on the nature of the *mushrik*'s *najasah*, saying only that 'it expresses the fact that there is a type of *qadharah* (uncleanness) that attaches to *mushrikun* and a type of purity that belongs to the *Masjid al-Haram*,' but that 'whatever the expression means, it is a different matter than avoiding contact with *kuffar* where there is moisture.'[127] It seems that he is here not so much pronouncing on the kind of *najasah* that characterizes *mushrik*s but on the idea that the passage is not referring to causes and consequences of ritual impurity, but rather, to contrasting qualities that belong to unbelief and unbelievers on the one hand and to believers and places of worship on the other.

Rather atypical are the implications that Fadlullah draws from the premise that the impurity attributed to the *mushrikun* is located in the realm of beliefs and morals, that it consists in 'the filth of [the *mushrik*'s] thoughts, spirit, and emotions' that arise out of the practice of idolatry. For Fadlullah, this does not translate into actual impurity (*al-najasah al-haqiqiyyah*); rather, it creates a 'psychological barrier' between unbelievers and Muslims.[128] For Fadlullah, all non-*kitabi* unbelievers are impure in this spiritual (*ma'nawiyyah*) manner, while no unbeliever is impure in a material sense, such that a Muslim would become ritually polluted by physical contact. What is important in Fadlullah's view is the arena of ideas, beliefs, morals, and spirituality, and the non-transferability of this realm into that of the material.

Fadlullah's rejection of both the ritual impurity and the physical impurity theses is reflected further in a cryptic discussion of the jurists' debates on the question of the nature of the *mushrik*'s *najasah*. The debate revolves, he writes, around what functions as the operative cause (*dalalah*) of *najasah*. Without giving much more detail, he says that those who consider the *mushrik* to be [intrinsically] *najas* do so 'by using a different *dalil* (indicator)', different, perhaps, than his own reference to the permissibility of unclean things such as blood in a closed container coming into the mosque. In other words, Fadlullah argues that if blood, which jurists agree is intrinsically impure, is allowed into the mosque if there is no risk of direct contact with it, then the *mushrikun* would also be permitted to enter the mosque so long as they did not have direct contact with Muslims. But, since *mushrik*s are barred from the mosque unconditionally, the reason for their prohibition must be other than either physical or ritual impurity. That reason, Fadlullah insists, is the 'spiritual opposition (*tanafur*) between what *mushriks* represent by the worship of idols and what the *Masjid al-Haram* represents in the worship of the one God.'[129]

Further, that it is not physical impurity that is intended is indicated, Fadlullah argues, by the time lapse allowed for their prohibition; if it were for reasons of physical impurity, it would be effective immediately. But, the time lapse indicates a gradual dedication of the *masjid*, and, as we will see below, the entire city of Mecca, to the worship of one God. Thus, for Fadlullah, there is no mistaking the fact that impurity is a serious and potent force, but its quality of impurity lies in the incompatibility of its ideas with those of the true faith in one God.

Determining boundaries: purity and sacred space

The discussion of the first two questions demonstrates that classical exegetes tend to advance the most restrictive application of the verse's potential. The majority includes Jews and Christians in the scope of the *mushrikun*, even as they tend to define the *mushrik*'s impurity in the most absolute terms of *najasah haqiqiyyah*. Consistent with this tendency, the majority of commentators also understand the prohibition as applicable beyond the *Masjid al-Haram* proper to all places in which Muslims perform ritual worship. Some, such as Miqdad al-Hilli, support this with the argument that by naming the one mosque, the *Masjid al-Haram*, as the forbidden field, the Qur'an is using a rhetorical device that names 'the most noble part' of something to mean the whole. Thus, *al-Masjid al-Haram* means, in fact, all mosques.[130] Miqdad alleges that this is the position of the *ahl al-bayt* (the Imams and therefore the Shi'as), that is, that unbelievers are forbidden entry to all mosques.[131]

Although, as was noted earlier, 'Ali was sent to make the proclamation to the polytheists, al-Tusi makes the point that the revelation comes as a command to the believers. *They* are to forbid the *mushrikun* access into the precincts of *al-Masjid al-Haram*. He argues on linguistic grounds, moreover, that the prohibition refers to any and all mosques, as well as to all unclean persons irrespective of particularities: all *kuffar* (unbelievers; sing: *kafir*) are unclean and must not come near any place of Muslim worship. Al-Tabarsi takes a slightly different view. While all unbelievers are forbidden first from association with Muslims, and then entry to the entire sacred area of the *haram*, Jews and Christians are permitted access to mosques; they are prohibited only from entering Mecca for the purpose of *hajj*.[132] Al-Tabarsi does not explain why they should be permitted access to other mosques, nor indeed, why they are barred from the entire city of Mecca. As noted earlier, al-Tabarsi's argument includes reference to the Sunni commentator Qatadah, who alleges that the *mushrikun* are forbidden to enter the *haram* 'because it is not permitted that *janab* enter the sacred place.'[133]

Miqdad and Kashani also invoke the Sunni legal scholars Malik, Shafi'i, and Abu Hanifah, who, they say, bar the *mushrikun* from performing the *hajj*. But Kashani states that the Imami position is more restrictive than them all in that it forbids them access not only to the *Masjid al-Haram*, but to the grounds surrounding it as well as to all other mosques.[134] This legal ruling seems to be influenced by a tendency to advance the most cautious and restrictive interpretations, a feature of Imami exegesis that we have already seen in each of the three questions treated in this essay. The exegetes' juxtaposition of Sunni views with their own suggests a desire to appear more pious than the Sunnis.

We may note that the words used in the scriptural text, *fa la yaqtaribu*, denote the command to 'not approach' or 'come near' to the place in question, a wording that demarcates a wider boundary around the sacred space than would a command to not enter it. This is particularly meaningful for al-Ardabili, who explains the phrase as signifying the same sense as '*wa la taqribu al-zina'* (do not come near adultery). That is, what is intended is a cautionary distancing from even the surroundings of what is forbidden. Al-Ardabili understands this as meaning that the *mushrikun* are forbidden not just from the *hajj* and *'umrah* (smaller *hajj*), but from any and all mosques,[135] presumably on the logic that mosques other than the *haram* would be the equivalent of 'nearness' to the *haram*, in concept if not in location. This is premised, furthermore, on the logic that it is the impurity of the *mushrikun*, coupled with 'the obligation [on Muslims] to exalt places [devoted to] God's worship (*wujub ta'zim sha'a'ir Allah*)' that is the reason for the prohibition,[136] and it is absolutely impermissible, al-Ardabili avers, that any impurity whatsoever should enter the mosque (*'adam jawaz idkhal mutlaq*). This is indicative of the principle that the impurity associated with unbelief in Islam does not mix with the purity and honour that belongs to Muslims and their places of worship.

Modern commentators share with their predecessors a strong support for this principle. We have already noted how Tabataba'i, without going into detail, appears to have this uppermost in his thinking.[137] However, drawing on the biographical and historical sources, Tabataba'i interprets access to the *Masjid*

al-Haram more specifically as referring to the *mushrikun*'s participation in the rituals of the pilgrimage, leading him to understand the prohibition as a way of completing the Islamization of the *hajj* ritual and the submission of the remaining *mushrikun* to Islam.[138]

Like al-Ardabili, Mughniyyah also draws a connection between purity and honour. Citing the position of the three Sunni imams referenced above (al-Shafi'i, Malik, and Abu Hanifah), Mughniyyah argues that Shafi'i's position, which would bar *kuffar* from the *Masjid al-Haram* only, while faithful to the literal meaning of the text, is not tenable because the operative cause (*'illah*) for the prohibition is impurity and respect for God's honour in the mosque, and this is valid for all mosques.[139] In other words, the incompatibility lies in the respective natures of *najasah* and the mosque. Furthermore, the matter of the *'illah* is procedurally comparable to the case of whiskey, which, even though there is no text explicitly forbidding it, is forbidden on the basis of the operative cause (*'illah*), which is drunkenness; likewise, should anything impure be barred – expelled and forbidden – from the mosque. He emphasizes, however, that what is meant by the impure person is the 'unbeliever worshipper of idols' (*al-jahid wa 'abid al-awthan*) and not *ahl al-kitab*, who, in Qur'an 5:5, are declared pure.[140] In summary, Mughniyyah is as expansive on prohibiting *najasah* from all Muslim places of worship as he is in restricting impurity to unbelievers other than *ahl al-kitab*.

Fadlullah's treatment of the place of prohibition question is similar in some respects to that of Mughniyyah. Like Mughniyyah, Fadlullah uses the argument of the incompatibility of opposing spiritual and moral qualities to justify the prohibition. As impurity belongs strictly to the realm of ideas and morals that are contrary to all that God is, they have no place in a sanctuary of God. It 'is natural,' he says, that the two not mix, 'for how is it possible that those come near it whose worship of idols represents all the meanings of spiritual, mental, and moral filthiness!?'[141] *Shirk* is the antithesis of true faith, 'the filth (*qadharah*) of sediment in which people live, the dregs of the mind, spirit, and emotions, made putrid by the darkness of the years […].'[142] True faith, in contrast, is like 'the depth of *taharah* (ritual purity) and the truth of *naqa'* (purity) and the source of *safa'* (serenity)' that 'transforms a person into an abundant renewing spring […].'[143] The two have a natural and absolute incompatibility on the spiritual and moral level.[144]

Fadlullah also sees the term '*Masjid al-Haram*' as having a wider field of reference than the *masjid* itself. However, whereas Mughniyyah sees it a encompassing all mosques, Fadlullah understands it as a shorthand for the entirety of the city of Mecca, a position he argues on the basis of a comparison with the verse: 'praise be to the one who carried his servant by night from the *Masjid al-Haram* to the *Masjid al-Aqsa* (farther mosque) whose precincts we have blessed' (Qur'an 17:1). 'For it is known,' Fadlullah points out, 'that the prophet was taken from the house of Umm Hani bint Abi Talib.'[145] In other words, the words *al-Masjid al-Haram* are a stand-in for the city of Mecca, in which was the home of Umm Hani bint Abi Talib; any specific location in Mecca that has the sanctity of the city in mind, may therefore be identified by the comprehensive term '*al-Masjid al-Haram*'. In conclusion, Fadlullah maintains the majority position barring non-*kitabi* (non-scriptuary) non-Muslims from the *masjid*, as well as the city of Mecca, but for different reasons than does exegetical tradition.

In summary, Fadlullah's moral and spiritual interpretation of the text leads to restricting its application to non-*kitabi* non-Muslims only, because the commonality of monotheistic belief shared by Muslims and *ahl al-kitab*, as well as their respective moral frameworks, are stronger than any differences that divide them. Secondly, his interpretive methodology leads him to posit the reason for the prohibition as lying solely within the realm of religious and moral ideas and ways of life, having nothing to do with either actual or ritual impurity. Finally, Fadlullah's analogical reasoning extends the prohibition to all of Mecca, on grounds of which one would be justified in assuming that Jews and Christians would be barred neither from the mosques nor from the city of Mecca.

Summary and conclusion

This analytic survey demonstrates a relatively consistent agreement among commentators on all three questions, to varying degrees, of unbeliever impurity and its relationship to sacred space. With regard to who qualifies as impure, significant changes are not noticeable until the modern commentators Mughniyyah and Fadlullah. Though also writing in the latter half of the twentieth century, Tababataba'i, in contrast, maintains the fiction of Mary's membership in the Trinity, by which he is able to delegitimize Christian claims to monotheism. Likewise, he faults Christians for falling into *shirk*-like beliefs by ascribing lordship to the Messiah. And, finally, he follows the mediaeval commentators in drawing on the Ezra narrative to call Jewish monotheism into question. Tabataba'i is therefore closer to the mediaeval commentators who typically rely on the discourse of implied idolatry to disqualify *ahl al-kitab* from the company of the pure, or, rather, to include them among the impure.

In contrast, Mughniyyah and Fadlullah place *ahl al-kitab* within the semantic field of *iman* rather than *kufr*. That is, their beliefs are more similar to a Muslim understanding of faith in God than to the *mushrik*'s polytheism. Mughniyyah marks a shift away from this interpretive methodology by linking verse 9:28 not with the verses that immediately follow it, but with passages that mention both *mushrik*s and *ahl al-kitab* together as distinct groups. Fadlullah distinguishes between idolatry as a cardinal doctrine and what we might refer to as 'accidental' idolatry that some monotheists may slip into quite unintentionally. The latter is not so dangerous as to alter the fundamental spiritual and moral orientation of Jews and Christians. For Fadlullah, this metaphysical orientation, and not the material body, is the locus of the Qur'anic notion of purity and impurity.

Reflecting on the possible reasons for the differences between Tabataba'i on the one hand and Mughniyyah and Fadlullah on the other, I would suggest that one factor would be the choice and use of sources. Tabataba'i appears to obtain his knowledge of Christian and Jewish doctrine from uniquely Muslim sources, such as the Qur'an and, especially, earlier exegesis. On the nature of impurity, for example, he quotes directly from Tabarsi's commentary. Moreover, Tabataba'i relies entirely on a literal and polemical interpretation of only one aspect of Qur'anic evaluation of Christian and Jewish monotheism (Qur'an 9:30-31), ignoring Qur'anic approbation of *ahl al-kitab* as a general category. While Mughniyyah also rests his argument on the Qur'an, he considers the matter from within the larger context of the scripture's classification of non-Muslims. Fadlullah's wider interest in Muslim relations with non-Muslims is evident in his exegesis. Although he takes Qur'an 9:30-31 into account, he provides a more nuanced exegesis, again, looking at Christian faith within the context, as it appears, of his personal experience in dialogue. Further research outside of the exegesis itself would be necessary to explore these lines of thinking more thoroughly.

Disagreement is more pronounced on the question of the nature of the unbeliever's impurity. Pre-modern commentators struggle to come to a unified opinion on whether unbelievers are afflicted with an actual, and therefore fixed, form of impurity, or if theirs is simply the same condition as Muslims who are in a transitory state of *janabah*. Unlike in the first question, the text gives little clue as to how to interpret the phrase, 'the *mushrikun* are impure.' If the author of *al-Ta'rifat al-Fiqhiyyah* is taken as correct – that *al-najasah* without qualification is the same as *janabah* and *junub* – the term (*najas*) would suggest the latter option, and the text would be expected to use *rijs* if actual impurity was the intended meaning. In order to argue for the 'actual impurity' interpretation, then, commentators must find some other method, which many do, though not very persuasively, in the grammatical point that the term signifies an unqualified description of a people who are characterized by it. If, on the other hand, the transient interpretation is accepted, the problem of what to do with the implied association between impurity and unbelief becomes problematic, for, as stated above, if all the *mushrikun* need do to be pure is to perform

ablutions, *shirk* effectively has no direct relationship to impurity. Al-Ardabili resolves the problem by positing a combination of the two types of impurity.

As with the first question, decidedly new ideas on the question of the nature of the *mushrik*'s impurity are introduced only in the modern period, particularly by Tabataba'i and Fadlullah, both of whom stress the notion that the qualities by which the *mushrik* is marked belong in the realm of ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and morals; in other words, impurity is, like *shirk*, a spiritual state of being. Fadlullah carries the more sustained argument, which verges on *batini* (hidden, inward) exegesis, completely dissociating this kind of impurity from either actual or ritual impurity. His argument relies on a very different methodology than other commentators, as he places the discussion of the unbeliever's impurity within the context of the rules of *taharah* and offers a historical-theological analysis regarding the time lapse of the command. The latter points also to the historical process involved in the gradual sanctification of Mecca as a sacred space to Islam.

With the third question, the extent of the prohibition, commentators again find a measure of consensus. All agree that *mushrikun* are to be barred at least from the *Masjid al-Haram*. Where they disagree is whether *al-Masjid al-Haram* refers solely to itself, to itself and the city of Mecca, or to itself and all other mosques, which share with the *Haram* the quality of sanctity. Amongst modern commentators, Mughniyyah uses the principle of incompatibility between the impurity and dishonour of unbelief on the one hand and the sanctity and honour of the mosque and true faith on the other, to argue for a universal ban of non-*kitabi* non-Muslims from all mosques. While occupied with this question, and resolving it in favour of the notion that the entire city of Mecca is made sacred by the presence of the mosque, Fadlullah's main concern is with the reason for the prohibition, which, again, is tied to the notion of incompatibility, a logical, as opposed to legal or formalistic type of reasoning. Tabataba'i again introduces the theological-historical dimension with his suggestion that the prohibition might be seen as fulfilling another stage of religio-political Islamization of the Ka'bah and the Arabian Peninsula. This would suggest that Tabataba'i sees the text as providing a religious justification for a change of relationship between Muslims and others.

Returning to the discussion with which this study began, we can conclude that despite some variance of opinion, the exegetical tradition on Qur'an 9:28 reflects the general framework outlined above regarding what counts as sacred space and how separation acts to make space sacred or to maintain its sacredness. However, within the context of Shi'a thought, although the human body is a locus of sacredness, it is not so independently of other factors; it must be made sacred, or denied sacredness, on the basis of fixed systems of belief. Further, bodies that participate in sacredness, as do those that do not, do so perpetually, even though the former may transition in and out of a transient form of impurity. That is, two types of sacredness correspond to two types of purity: intrinsic purity, which is fixed, and ritual purity which is transient; likewise, for impurity and the corresponding quality of non-sacredness. Finally, the unanimity of belief that at least some non-Muslims, specifically those least like the Muslims in doctrine and practice, must be barred from the space of Muslims and Islamic worship point to the enduring validity of the notion that whether physical or metaphorical, boundaries are inherent to the sacralization of space.

I suggest, then, that the decision to bar non-Muslims, in whole or in part, from the sacred precincts was as much a matter of process in the sacralizing of Muslim space as it was the consequence of an already existing sacrality. That is, it may be seen as the culmination of a sacralization movement of the Meccan sanctuary that began with the Abraham/Ishmael narrative of the building of the Ka'bah,[146] followed later by the change of *qibla* from Jerusalem to Mecca.[147] On a socio-historical level, the exclusion of *mushrikun*, and possibly *ahl al-kitab*, would shore up Muslim claims to Abrahamic authenticity and on the metaphysical level would ensure the fulfilment of the mosque's sacred purpose.

Table of Key Transliterated Terms

Term Appearing in Text	Arabic/Persian	Term With Diacritics
ahl al-kitab	اهل الكتاب	*ahl al-kitÁb*
al-Masjid al-Haram	المسجد الحرام	*al-Masjid al-ÍarÁm*
Mushrik	مشرك	*Mushrik*
Mushrikun	مشركون	*Mushrikun*
Najas	نجس	*Najas*
Najasah	نجاسة	*NajÁsah*
Tafsir	تفسير	*TafsĐr*
Tafasir	تفاسير	*TafÁsĐr*
Taharah	طهارة	*ÔahÁrah*
shirk	شرك	*shirk*

[1] Al-Hurr al-‘Amili, *Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah ila Tahsil Masa’il al-Shari‘ah* I (Tehran: al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1977), 268.

[2] The Islamic purity code, and its place in ritual life, is increasingly apparent among Western scholars of Islam. See, for example, Kevin Reinhart, ‘Impurity/No Danger’, in *History of Religions* XXX (1990), 1-24; Ze’ev Maghen, ‘Close Encounters: Some Preliminary Observations on the Transmission of Impurity in Early Sunni Jurisprudence’, in *Islamic Law and Society* VI, no. 3 (1999), 348-392; Marion Holmes Katz, *Body of Text: The Emergence of the Sunni Law of Ritual Purity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002); Ze’ev Maghen, ‘First Blood: Purity, Edibility, and the Independence of Islamic Jurisprudence’, in *Der Islam* LXXXI, no. 1 (2004), 49-95; Richard Gauvain, ‘Ritual Rewards: A Consideration of Three Recent Approaches to Sunni Purity Law’, in *Islamic Law and Society* XII, no. 3 (2005), 333-393; Marion H. Katz, ‘The Study of Islamic Ritual and the Meaning of *Wudu’*, in *Der Islam* LXXXII (2005), 106-145.

[3] See, for example, Abu Ja‘far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan at-Tusi, *Al-Nihayah: A Concise Description of Islamic Law and Legal Opinions*, trans. A. Ezzati (London: ICAS Press, 2008), xv-xvi; al-Sayyid ‘Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani and Asghar A. M. Ja‘far, *Islamic Laws*: *English Version of Taudhihul Masa’el According to the Fatawa of Ayatullah Al Uzama Syed Ali Al Husaini Seestani* (Middlesex: World Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna-asheri Muslim Communities, 1994), items 322-328.

[4] Marion Holmes Katz, *Body of Text: The Emergence of the Sunni Law of Ritual Purity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 145.

[5] For a thorough and illuminating study of monotheistic traditions and table fellowship, see David Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

[6] This varies, depending on the jurist’s legal opinion.

[7] See, for example, al-Sistani, *Islamic Laws*. See also, Freidenreich, Ch. 11, ‘‘Only Monotheists may be Entrusted with Slaughter’: The Targets of Shi‘i Foreign Food Restrictions.’

[8] Exegetical and juristic discourses rely on the scriptural basis of Surahs 5:5 and 6:118-121 of the Qur’an, which read, respectively: ‘Today, all good things have been made lawful for you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful for you as your food is lawful for them. So are chaste, believing, women, as well as chaste women of the people who were given the Scripture before you, as long as you have given them their bride-gifts, and married them, not taking them as lovers or secret mistresses. […]’ and ‘So [believers] eat any [animal] over which God’s name has been pronounced, if you believe in His revelations. […] and do not eat anything over which God’s name has not been pronounced, for that is breaking the law.’

[9] All translations from the Qur’an used in this article are from M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’an: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[10] On purity and non-Muslims in Sunni law, see Janina Safran, ‘Rules of Purity and Confessional Boundaries: Maliki Debates about the Pollution of the Christian,’ in *History of Religions* XLII, no. 3 (February 2003), 197-212;

on purity and non-Muslims in Shi'a law, see Taymaz Tabrizi, 'Ritual Purity and Buddhists in Modern Twelver Shi'a Exegesis and Law', in *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* V, no. 4 (Autumn 2012), 455-471; and Aaron Varricchio, 'The Purity of Non-Muslims in Shi'a Jurisprudence', in *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* III, no. 2 (Spring 2010), 167-184.

[11] See G. R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 45 <http://www.myilibrary.com?ID=15447>. Accessed 27 June 2014.

[12] Juristic principles such as the assumption of purity, the necessity of certainty of conditions to the contrary, and non-investigation of such conditions, are effective in this way. See the author's unpublished PhD dissertation, *Texts of Tension, Spaces of Empowerment: Migrant Muslims and the Limits of Shi'ite Legal Discourse*, Concordia University, Montreal, 2009. See especially, Ch. 4, 'Purity, Food, and Commercial Relations: At Home in the Hijra?', 178-84.

[13] David Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 154.

[14] Ibid., pp. 158-9.

[15] See John Renard, *Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 40.

[16] See Brown, 170-76. The author discusses doorways, inner chambers, and other ways that architectural spaces reflect a sacred view of reality.

[17] Ibid., 364-5.

[18] Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 49.

[19] 'Lawful and Unlawful', in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an* III (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001-2006), 172.

[20] 'Taboo', in *Encyclopedia of Religion* XIV, 1st edition (New York: Macmillan, 1987-), 233. See also Toshiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966), 237.

[21] Isutzu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 237-38.

[22] Diana Steigerwald, 'Twelver Shi'i Ta'wil', in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an* (West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2009), 373-85 (see pp. 373-77).

[23] Steigerwald, 'Twelver Shi'i Ta'wil', 375.

[24] Meir M. Bar-Asher, 'Shi'ism and the Qur'an', in *Encyclopaedia of the QurÞÁn*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Washington DC: Brill Online (Georgetown University), 2014) <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/shiism-and-the-quran-COM_00181>. Accessed 9 June 2014.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Bruce Fudge, *Qur'anic Hermeneutics: Al-Tabrisi and the craft of commentary* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 10.

[27] Ibid., x.

[28] Ibid., xi; Claude Gilliot, 'Exegesis of the Qur'an: Classical and Medieval', *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* II, ed. J. D. McAuliffe (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2002), 118.

[29] Fudge, *Qur'anic Hermeneutics*, 41-42. See also Bar-Asher, 'Shi'ism and the Qur'an'; and Mahmoud Ayoub, 'The Speaking Qur'an and the Silent Qur'an: A Study of the Principles and Development of Imami Shi'i Tafsir', in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 177-98 (see pp. 183-92).

[30] For a list of their names, see Steigerwald, 'Twelver Shi'i Ta'wil', 381; and Ayoub, 'The Speaking Qur'an and the Silent Qur'an', 184.

[31] This does not have a significantly detrimental effect on the research for at least two reasons. Firstly, earlier material inevitably appears in later works, though it is not always identified as such; secondly, the conclusions I wish to draw are concerned with observing trends that maintain their relevance into contemporary times, and these are not necessarily dependent on pre-*ghaybah* sources.

[32] Mahmoud Ayoub places them in the third generation of Shi'i commentators that began in the 5th Islamic century (11th century AD) and extended 'well into the sixteenth century AD.' See Ayoub, 'The Speaking Qur'an and the Silent Qur'an', 185.

[33] To eliminate confusion, I will refer to the earlier Kashani as Kashani, and the later one as al-Kashani.

[34] Bar-Asher, 'Shi'ism and the Qur'an', n.p.

[35] For example, Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization, Vol. 2: The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 36-39.

[36] Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Tusi, *al-Nihayah*, trans. A. Ezzati (London: ICAS Press, 2008), i. See also, Jane D. McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 46.
[37] Al-Tusi, *al-Nihayah*, iii.
[38] Fudge, *Qur'anic Hermeneutics*, 38.
[39] Ibid., 29.
[40] Ibid., 35, 32.
[41] Ibid., 37-39.
[42] Al-Sheikh al-Baghdadi, *Mu'jam al-Buldan* (Beirut: Dar Bayrut li al-Tab'ah wa al-Nashr, 1956), 294.
[43] Rula Abisaab, 'Shi'ite Beginnings and Scholastic Tradition in Jabal 'Amil in Lebanon', in *The Muslim World* LXXXIX (January, 1999), 10-13.
[44] Ibid., 15.
[45] For a description of legal commentaries and how they differ from other commentaries, see Jane D. McAuliffe, 'Legal Exegesis: Christians as a Case Study', in *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 54-77 (see pp. 56-7).
[46] Ibid., 70.
[47] Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi, *Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam: from the Office of Mufti to the Institution of Marja'* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996), 116ff.
[48] Ibid., 180ff.
[49] McAuliffe, 'Legal Exegesis', 70.
[50] See McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians*, 76-78.
[51] See Cyrus Ali Zargar, 'Revealing Revisions: Fayd al-Kashani's Four Versions of al-Kalimat al-Maknuna', in *Iranian Studies* XLVII (January 2014), 241-262.
[52] Chibli Mallat, Part 1 – Socio-economic stance: the Revolt of Section III: Thought at the periphery: Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah in 'Aspects of Shi'i Thought from the South of Lebanon' <http://www.bintjbeil.com/E.shii_mallat.html>. Accessed May, 2002.
[53] Mallat, Part 3 – Mughniyyah's debate with Khomeini over the governance of the Islamic State.
[54] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn', in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. John Esposito et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 161.
[55] In English they are: *Qur'an dar Islam* (*The Qur'an in Islam: Its Impact & Influence on the Life of Muslims*, London: Zahra Publications, 1987); *Shi'ah dar Islam* (*Shi'ite Islam*) (Albany: 1975); and *Islamic Teachings: An Overview* (N.Y.: Mostazafan Foundation, 1989).
[56] McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians*, 87.
[57] Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters* I (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 7.
[58] Olivier Carré, 'Fadlullah, Muhammad Husayn', in *The Oxford Encycopedia of the Modern Islamic World* I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 453.
[59] (Beirut: Dar al-Zahra', 1979/1399).
[60] It appears three times as an adjective describing heavenly spouses (*ajwaj mutahhirah*) 2:25, 3:15, 4:57; twice as a command to Abraham and Ishmael to purify God's house (2:125, 22:26); in reference to the need for Muslims to purify themselves prior to ritual worship (2:222, 5:6, 56:79); God loves the pure and those who purify themselves (9:108); it is used several times in reference to an action commanded because it is purer (2:232, 33:53, 58:12); often, God is the agent of purification (3:42, 3:55, 5:41, 33:33); as often, people are told to purify themselves or something belonging to them, or are praised for having purified themselves (7:82, 8:11, 9:108, 11:78, 27:56, 74:4); things that are or may be pure or have a purifying effect, such as water (25:48), alms (9:103), drink (76:21), and pages of the Qur'an (80:14 and 98:2).
[61] The exception is Surah 5:41, where God's intention not to purify Muhammad's opponents confirms for them their punishing fate in this world and the next.
[62] Al-Shaykh Abu 'Ali al-Fadhl ibn al-Hasan al-Tabarsi, *Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* III (Qum: Maktabat Ayatollah al-'Uzma al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1936), 20; al-Shaykh al-Ajall Jamal al-Din (Suyuri) al-Miqdad, *Kanz al-'Irfan fi Fiqh al-Qur'an* I (Tehran: Haidar, 1929), 45-46.
[63] Al-Mufti al-Sayyid Muhammad 'Amim al-Ihsan al-Mujaddidi al-Barakati, *al-Ta'rifat al-Fiqhiyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), 72, 256.
[64] See, for example, al-Tabarsi, *Majma' al-Bayan* III, 20.
[65] Al-Barakati, *al-Ta'rifat al-Fiqhiyyah*, 73, 172.
[66] Surahs 5:90; 6:125; 6:145; 7:71; 9:95; 9:125; 10:100; 22:30; 33:33.

[67] 'They will swear by Allah unto you, when ye return unto them, that ye may let them be. Let them be, for lo! They are unclean (*rijs*), and their abode is hell as the reward for what they used to earn.'
[68] See also 6:125; 7.71; 9:95; and 9:125, which reads: 'But as for those in whose hearts is a disease, it (Surahs of the Qur'an, it seems) added to them filth upon filth and they died while yet unbelievers (*kafirun*).' In other words, hearing the Qur'an only increased them in unbelief and emphasized the contrast in moral quality between the hearts of unbelievers and of believers.
[69] Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 235.
[70] Ibid., p. 238.
[71] Ibn Hisham, *A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah, The Life of Muhammad*, trans., A. Guillaume (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1955, 1967), 617-19. The year is also cited by several commentators, e.g. Fayd al-Kashani, *Tafsir al-Safi* II (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'Ilmi li al-Matbu'at, 1982), 218.
[72] Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari* VIII, trans. Ismail K. Poonawala (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 160ff.
[73] Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan fi al-Tafsir al-Qur'an* V (Najaf: Maktabat al-Qasir, 1960), 234.
[74] Al-Tabari, *History* IX, 40-81.
[75] Ibid., 44-45.
[76] Ibn Hisham, 609, quoting Surah 9:108.
[77] Al-Tabari, *History* IX, 77.
[78] Ibid, 77-78.
[79] Ibid., 78.
[80] F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 243.
[81] Ibid., p. 244.
[82] McAuliffe, 'Legal Exegesis', 54-77. The two commentators are Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 468/1076) and al-Miqdad al-Hilli (d. 826/1423), the latter of whom is discussed in this paper.
[83] In fact, an early commentary attributed to the 11th Imam, al-'Askari (d. 874), discusses only the context of the verse and, in accordance with the sectarian concerns of pre-*ghaybah tafsir*, is fully preoccupied with explaining the Prophet's decision to replace Abu Bakr with 'Ali as the person charged with the task of declaring the *bara'ah*. See al-Imam Abi Muhammad al-Hasan ibn 'Ali al-'Askari, *al-Tafsir* (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Imam al-Mahdi, 1988), 558-9.
[84] Fayd al-Kashani, *Tafsir al-Safi* II, 318-33.
[85] Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Tafsir al-Tabari: Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'an* XIV (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.), 192.
[86] Ibid.
[87] al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan*, V, 239.
[88] Ibid., 241. The verse reads in full: 'They take their rabbis and their monks as lords, as well as Christ, the son of Mary. But they were commanded to serve only one God: there is no god but Him; He is far above whatever they set up as His partners!'
[89] Miqdad, *Kanz al-'Irfan* I, 49, 50.
[90] al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan* V, 242.
[91] Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Ardabili, *Zubdat al-Bayan fi Ahkam al-Qur'an* I (Qum: Salman Farsi Press, 1375 AH (solar)), 66.
[92] Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* IX (Tehran: Matba'ah al-Haydari, 1379 AH, 1970), 255 (Arabic). I have used both the Arabic and Persian versions of his *tafsir*.
[93] Ibid. IX, 254.
[94] For a fuller discussion of Tabataba'i's views of Buddhism and its relationship to Christianity, see Taymaz Tabrizi, 'Ritual Purity'.
[95] Surah 3:64. 'Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him).'
[96] Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan* IX, 256 (Arabic).
[97] Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, *al-Tafsir al-Kashif* IV (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm li al-Malayyin, 1969), 27.
[98] Ibid.
[99] 'Neither those People of the Book who disbelieve, nor the idolaters would like anything good to be sent down to you from your Lord […]' (2:105). 'Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book and the idolaters were not about to change their ways until they were sent clear evidence (98:1).'
[100] Mughniyyah, *al-Tafsir al-Kashif* IV, 28.

[101] See Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 131.
[102] Fadlullah, *Min Wahy al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Malak, 1998), XI, 88.
[103] Ibid., 74-75.
[104] Ibid.
[105] al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan* V, 234.
[106] Ibid., 235.
[107] Rienhart, 'Impurity/No Danger,' 1-24 (see p. 21).
[108] Fadl ibn Hasan al-Tabarsi, *Mukhtasar Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* I (Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami, 1413 AH), 20.
[109] Miqdad, *Kanz al-'Irfan* I, 45-46.
[110] Ibid., 46.
[111] Ibid., 47.
[112] Ibid., 67.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 45.
[115] Ibid., 45, n. 2.
[116] al-Ardabili, *Zubdat al-Bayan* I, 66.
[117] Miqdad, *Kanz al-'Irfan* I, 47.
[118] The editor's footnote cites *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, *Abwab al-Najasah*, 13.
[119] Ibid. I, 48, and n. 2 & 3.
[120] al-Ardabili, *Zubdat al-Bayan* I, 68.
[121] Ibid. I, 69.
[122] Fayd al-Kashani, *Tafsir al-Safi* II (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'Ilmi li al--Matbu'at, 1982), 333.
[123] Kashani, *Minhaj al-Sadiqin* IV (Tehran: Kitabfurushi Islami, 1354 AH (solar)), 242.
[124] Hasan al-Basri was an important early theologian, mystic, and scholar.
[125] Kashani, *Minhaj* IV, 242.
[126] Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan* IX, 238 (Arabic).
[127] Tabataba'i, *Tafsir al-Mizan* IX ([Tehran]: Bunyad-i 'Ilmi va Fikri-yi 'Allamah Tabataba'i, 1991), 347-48 (Persian).
[128] Fadlullah, *Min Wahy* XI, 68.
[129] Ibid. XI, 70
[130] Miqdad, *Kanz al-'Irfan* I, 46.
[131] Ibid., 49.
[132] Al-Tabarsi, *Majma' al-Bayan* III, 20.
[133] Al-Tabarsi, *Mukhtasar* I, 20. The Sunni commentator, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Ansari al-Qurtubi (d. 1273), uses the term *janab*, which refers to legal or ritual impurity, suggesting that were the *mushrikun* to perform *ghusl* or *wudu'* there would be no reason to bar them from a Muslim place of worship. Al-Qurtubi, *Mukhtasar Tafsir al-Qurtubi* II (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1987), 281.
[134] Kashani, *Minhaj* IV, 243. According to Kashani, Abu Hanifah's view is that they are forbidden only from making the *hajj* and *'umrah* but not from the *Masjid al-Haram* or other mosques more generally. Malik, on the basis of *qiyas* (analogical reasoning), forbids them from entering all mosques, and Shafi'i forbids them entry specifically into the *Masjid al-Haram*.
[135] Al-Ardabili, *Zubdat al-Bayan* I, 69.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan* IX, 238. (Arabic)
[138] Ibid.
[139] Mughniyyah, *al-Kashif* IV, 28.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Fadlullah, *Min Wahy* XI, 69.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid. XI, 68-69.
[145] Ibid. XI, 71.
[146] See, for example, Surah 2:125.
[147] Announced in Surah 2:143.