The Methodology of al-Maturidi’s Quranic Exegesis: An Analytical Study on *Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah*

Ahmad Choirul Rofiq
Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Ponorogo, Jawa Timur
e-mail: ach.rofiq@gmail.com

Received: November 3, 2017 | Accepted: April 5, 2018

**Abstract**
According to Islamic theology, al-Maturidi is one of the three prominence Muslim theologians of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah* who are called as *aqtab madhhab Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah* (the leaders of Sunnite school of thought). In addition to his reputation as a theologian, al-Maturidi actually has competency in various Islamic sciences. In the Qur’anic exegesis, he has *Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah* or *Ta’wilat Alquran*. This article is going to elucidate the features of his work that encompass at least seven characteristics. Al-Maturidi prefers to combine the naqli and ‘aqli sources. Consequently, it can be identified as *tafsîr bi al-izdîwaj* (the exegesis which amalgamates *tafsîr bi al-ma’thur* with *tafsîr bi al-ra’y*). He is not an excessive interpreter in using grammatical analysis to interpret the Qur’anic verses. He sometimes presents many styles of *qirâ’ah* (recitation of the Qur’an) without thorough explanation. He almost never takes *Isrâ’iliyyat* (the Judeo-Christian traditions and tales) to interpret the Qur’anic verses. He favors *tawassut* (nonaligned and independent standpoint) when dealing with many different viewpoints among the theologians. He tends to follow the Hanafite school of thought in discussing the jurisprudential Qur’anic verses. He applies *asbab al-nuzul* (the causes of revelation) loosely.

**Abstrak**
Dia menyukai *tawassut* (sudut pandang yang tidak selaras dan independen) ketika berhadapan dengan banyak sudut pandang yang berbeda di antara para teolog. Dia cenderung mengikuti aliran pemikiran Hanafi dalam membahas ayat-ayat Alquran yurisprudensi. Dia menerapkan *asbâb al-nuzûl* (penyebab wahyu) secara longgar.

**Keywords:** Methodology of Qur’anic exegesis, *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah*, Abu Manshur al-Maturidi, *naql*, *‘aql*.

**Introduction**

The history of Islam periodically can be divided into three periods, and they are the classical period (30-648/650-1250), the middle period (648-1215/1250-1800) and the modern period (since 1215/1800). All along its history, Islam had two golden ages, namely, the first and the second golden ages. The first golden ages persisted in the classical period when the expansion and the integration of Islamic government occurred before the prophet Muhammad (may God bless and grant him salvation) dead in 11/632 and continued under the administration of Rashidun caliphs (13-35/634-661) and Ummayad dynasty (41-132/661-750). Whereas the second golden ages took place in the middle period marked by Ottoman dynasty in Turkey (680-1342/1281–1923), Savafid dynasty in Iran (907-1149/1501–1736) and Mongol dynasty in India (932-1275/1526–1858).¹

During the first golden ages, there were three prominence Muslim theologians of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah* school of thought, i.e. Abu al-Hasan al-Ash’ari (d. 330/941) in Basrah, Abu Mansur Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Maturidi (d. 333/944) in Samarqand (Transoxiana) and Abu Ja’far al-Tahawi (d. 321/933) in Egypt.²

Additionally, Jalal Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hamid Musa said that those three Islamic scholars were also called as *aqîbat madhhab Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah* (the leaders of Sunnite school of thought) which encompassed al-Ash’ari, al-Maturidi dan al-Tahawi,³ although among the followers of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah* or most Muslim people generally, including the Indonesian citizens, as if there is a consensus of opinion that their major kingpins on *kalâm* are only two theologians, and those are al-Ash’ari and al-Maturidi. Whereas al-Tahawi seemed unlucky because his name was nearly forgotten from the study of *kalâm*.

---


Besides his popularity on kalâm, al-Maturidi also have had many works on different subjects. More completely, his works numbered over 24 titles. They are 2 titles on tafsir (Qur’anic exegesis) and tajwid (proper pronunciation for correct recitation of the Qur’an), 4 titles on fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), 12 titles on kalâm, 1 title on tasawwuf (sufism) and 5 titles on other various themes.4

Al-Maturidi’s book on Qur’anic exegesis is entitled Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah (the Sunnite interpretations) that is widely known as Ta’wîlat Alquran (the Qur’anic interpretations). The book whose manuscript is written by this Imam al-Mutakallimîn (leader of theologians) dan Ra’is Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah (mentor of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah), is found in several places. Among of them are Turkish libraries in Istanbul, Egyptian library of Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah in Cairo, Syrian library of Dar al-Kutub al-Zahiriyyah in Damascus, British Museum in London and Berlin library in Germany.5 However, the comprehensive discussions on this book are hardly seen. Moreover, many Qur’anic studies rarely mention the name of al-Maturidi as a Qur’anic exegetist.

Ahmad al-Shirbasi when explained the levels of Sunnite exegetist, he did not allude to al-Maturidi, but on the contrary he remarked on another theologian who lived at the time of al-Maturidi, and that was al-Ash’ari. Excerpting the statement of al-Fadl bin al-Hasan al-Tibrishi, a Syi’ite priest, al-Shirbasi said in detail the following elucidation.


---

4 See the appendix of Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah (Baghdad: al-Irshad, 1983), 693
5 See the preface of Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah written by Muhammad Mustafid al-Rahman, 3-4.

The assertion on al-Ash’ari as an exegetist is also followed by Muhammad Husayn al-Dahabi in his al-Tafsîr wa al-Mufassirûn (the exegesis and exegetists). He declared that the name of al-Ash’ari’s Qur’anic exegesis was al-Mukhtazin (the treasure storage)⁷.


Although al-Maturidi was not famous as an exegetist, there were few writers who acknowledged him. Among of them were Muhammad bin Abi al-Qurashi (d. 775/1373) in Tabaqât al-Hanafîyyah¹¹, Haji Khalifah (d. 1067/1654) in Kāshf al-‘umûn,¹² and Sadiq bin Husayn al-Qafuji (d. 1307/1889) in Abjâd al-‘Ulûm.¹³

**Biography of al-Maturidi**

His name was Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Mahmud Abu Mansur al-Maturidi¹⁴. He was born in Maturid or Maturit, a district of Samarqand.¹⁵ His noble lineage is connected to Abu Ayyub Khalid bin Zayd bin Kulayb al-Ansari (d. 52/672), a companion of prophet Muhammad from the clan of Khazraj in Medina.

---

when Muhammad stopped by his house in the course of Hegira (migration) journey from Mecca to Medina. Al-Maturidi’s birth is still in dispute among the historians, although most of them have had a consensus that al-Maturidi died in 333/944 and was buried in Samarqand.  

To make a supposition about al-Maturidi’s birth, we can relate it to the years when his teachers died. For instance, the death of Nusair bin Yahya al-Balkhi (d. 268/881) and Muhammad bin Muqatil al-Razi (d. 248/862). After that, we can presume that al-Maturidi most probably was born before 248/862. Thus, if he was ten years old when graduated from his elementary school and then directly studied with instruction of Muhammad bin Muqatil al-Razi, so he presumably was born in 238/852. If this presumption is true, it is can be concluded that his age is almost 92 years old. In addition, he was born in the reign of al-Mutawakkil (232-247/846-861) and he was 9 years old when al-Mutawakkil was assasinated in 248/862.

Hence, al-Maturidi was born in 22 years before the birth of al-Ash’ari (d. 330/941), who was born in 260/873, even though another information says that he was born in 270/883. If the former option (260/873) is chosen, it can be said that al-Ash’ari has begun to support *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah* in 300/912 because he has left his teacher, Abu ‘Ali Muhammad al-Jubbaï (d. 303/915), and has declared to reject the Mu’tazilah when he was 40 years old. Whereas al-Maturidi, has had contribution to advocate *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ’ah* before 300/912.

The historians do not give details about how he got his education along his life. It is told that at least he studied Islamic sciences after taking educational supervision from four Islamic scholars whose academic sequence referred to Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767). They were Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Juzjani, Abu Nasr Ahmad al-’Iyadi, Muhammad bin Muqatil al-Razi (d. 248/802) and Nusair bin Yahya al-Balkhi (d. 268/881). Therefore, it is unmistakable to conclude that the Hanafite educational supervision was taken by al-Maturidi. Besides, his teachers were the scholars who had a great contribution to spread the Hanafite school of thought in two territories governed by the authority of the Samanite Dynasty, namely, Transoxiana and Khurasan. For this reason, it is tolerable that al-Maturidi leans towards the Hanafite which at that time also become the most prominent trend in the society. Furthermore, he almost never taken an academic journey outside Transoxiana and Khurasan. He learnt from Abu Nasr Ahmad al-’Iyadi in Samarqand, as well as from Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Juzjani, Nusair bin Yahya al-Balkhi and Muhammad bin Muqatil al-Razi in Khurasan. Consequently, this can refuses the assumption that

---

al-Maturidi has been influenced by al-Ash’ari in constructing his theological thoughts, notwithstanding that there are several resemblances between both of them.\(^{21}\)

The followers of al-Maturidi conferred him many special titles to show their admiration. Some of his titles are *Imam al-Huda* (the leader of guidance), *Qudwat Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Ihtida’a* (the model of those who follow Hadits and guidance), *Rafi’ Al’am al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah* (the upholder of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah’s banners), *Qali’ Adalil al-Fitnah wa al-Bid’ah* (the destroyer of deviate defamation and heresy), *Imam al-Mutakallimîn* (the leader of theologians) and *Musahhih ‘Aqa’id al-Muslimin* (the corrector of Muslims’ beliefs).\(^{22}\) Those honorary degrees indicate the high academic position reached by al-Maturidi. However there are few writers call al-Maturidi *The Second Great ‘Father’ of Sunnite Theology\(^ {23}\)* or *The Second Great Theologian of the Sunnite\(^ {24}\)* because his rank is placed under al-Ash’ari.

**Al-Maturidi’s Qur’anic Exegesis**

After examining al-Maturidi’s Qur’anic Exegesis, it can be stated that his exegesis has several characteristics or features. Here are the details. The first, the combination between *naqli* and ‘*aqli* sources. The *naqli* source consists of the Qur’an, Hadits (tradition) conveyed by prophet or his companions, whereas the ‘*aqli* source is stemmed from his thoughts (ijtihad). According to this fact, it is acceptable to say that al-Maturidi’s Qur’anic Exegesis can be called *tafsîr bi al-izdiwaj* (the exegesis which amalgamates *tafsîr bi al-ma’thur* with *tafsîr bi al-ra’y*).

Here is the example of his commentary with the assistance of Qur’anic verses themselves.


The words “*yawm al-din*” in this verse means the day of reckoning and repayment for all our deeds or the judgement day. In this regard, its meaning resembles the spirit of QS.37:53 and QS. 24:25.

“When we die and become dust and bones, shall we indeed receive rewards and punishments?” (QS. 37:53)

On that Day Allah will pay them back (all) their just dues.” (QS. 24:25).\(^ {25}\)

Besides by the assistance of Qur’anic verses, al-Maturidi was also assisted by the prophet tradition. The main feature caught by everyone who reads *Ta’wilat Ahl


\(^{23}\) Von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam*, 130.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 207.

al-Sunnah is that al-Maturidi never mentions the transmission line of tradition (sanad) when he quotes the tradition. Al-Maturidi usually uses specific terms such as ma ruwiya ‘an al-nabiyy (the tradition that transmitted from the prophet), ma ruwiya ‘an rasul Allah (the tradition that transmitted from the messenger of Allah), kaqawlih salla Allah ‘alayh wa sallam (for instance, the saying of Muhammad PBUH), li ma ruwiya fi al-khabar (like as transmitted in the tradition), må jà’a ‘an rasûl Allah (the tradition that comes from the messenger of Allah), daliluh qawluh salla Allah ‘alayh wa sallam (its argument is the saying of Muhammad PBUH), wa fi ba’d al-akhbar (and in some traditions), må jà’a fi al-khabar (the argument that stated in the tradition) and dhukir fi al-khabar (said in the tradition). 26

Therefore, it is acceptable if there is many questions on the reason that makes al-Maturidi not to mention any ascription of transmission line (sanad) in his commentary, although he surely knows that sanad is one of important elements that should not be abandoned to check the reliability of tradition. Moreover, according to al-Dhahabi, the discarding of sanad which is accustomed among the exegetists has negative effect on al-wad’ (falsifying tradition) in the interpretation and creates many amalgamations between sahih (reliable tradition) and mawdû’ (counterfeit tradition). Furthermore, it also makes Isra’iliyyat (the Judeo-Christian traditions and tales) outspread widely. 27

Perhaps the question above cannot be answered exactly, except by al-Maturidi himself. However, it is tolerable if we make a presumption on his motivation. Presumably al-Maturidi is purposeful to abandon the sanad because he does not want the attention of his commentary readers will be altered to the insignificant things and then disremember the most considerable ones. Besides, al-Maturidi surely has known that there were many Islamic scholars who has not only paid their attention to the prophet traditions but also collected and written them in the specific books, such as Abu ‘Abd Allah Muhammad al-Bukhari (d. 256/869) and Muslim bin al-Hajjaj al-Nisaburi (d. 261/874) whose residence, namely, Bukhara and Nishapur, by coincidence is not far from Samarqand, the birthplace of al-Maturidi.

Here is the example of his commentary assisted by the prophet tradition.

Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods. (QS. 2: 228).

The words “thalathah quru’” above, according to al-Maturidi’s interpretation, is similar to thalathah hayd (three periods of menstruation). Even though it also can be interpreted as thalathah athar (three periods of cleanness), but the appropriate meaning is thalathah hayd because this meaning is the same as mentioned in the tradition that the prophet Muhammad PBUH said: إن عدّة الأمة خصّصت (The waiting period for a slave widow is two periods of menstruation). Two periods of

26 Ibid. 8, 9, 226, 322, 385, 417, 479, 526 and 634.
menstruation in that tradition is a part of the waiting period for a free widow. Hence, the proper interpretation for this verse is three periods of menstruation.\(^{28}\)

In addition to the tradition, Al-Maturidi also refers to the statements of prophet companions. One of companions whose statement was frequently quoted by Al-Maturidi is ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abbas (d. 68/687). For example, when Al-Maturidi interprets the following verse.

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds (QS. 1: 2).

The words al-hamd li Allah (Praise be to Allah) cannot be only interpreted that Allah praises Himself to show His right of admiration in front of all His creatures, but also can be interpreted that Allah orders, “Say: Praise be to Allah!” Because the word al-hamd is attributed to Allah, so it contains implicitly the obligation for us to express gratitude to Allah, the Almighty. ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abbas says that al-hamd li Allah means al-shukr li Allah bi ma sana’ ila khalqih (All gratitudes are to Allah for His bestowal to His creatures). Besides, the command to express gratitude can be understood from the tradition that talks about how the prophet expresses his gratitude by doing the prayer thoroughly until his sole of feet become puffy. Therefore, those who submit and obey Allah’s orders are akin to those who express gratitude to Allah.\(^{29}\)

The other companions and followers whose viewpoints and outlooks are also alluded by al-Maturidi are Abu Bakr (d. 13/634),\(^{30}\) ‘Umar bin al-Khattab (d. 23/643),\(^{31}\) ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan (d. 35/655),\(^{32}\) Ali bin Talib (d. 40/660),\(^{33}\) ‘Abd Allah bin Mas’ud (d. 32/652),\(^{34}\) Abu Musa al-Ash’ari (d. 44/664),\(^{35}\) ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Umar (d. 73/692),\(^{36}\) Ubayy bin Ka’b (d. 31/651),\(^{37}\) ‘Abd Allah bin al-Zubayr (d. 73/692),\(^{38}\) Abu Hurayrah (d. 59/678),\(^{39}\) Hasan bin ‘Ali (d. 50/670),\(^{40}\) ‘Aishah binti

---

\(^{28}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 493. Al Jassas mentions this tradition with two transmission lines, i.e. both from ‘Aishah and Ibn ‘Umar. See Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Razi al Jassas, Ahkam Alquran, vol. 01. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1993), 499-500.

\(^{29}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 7-9.

\(^{30}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 450.

\(^{31}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 213.

\(^{32}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 488-489.

\(^{33}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 412.

\(^{34}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 155 and 398.

\(^{35}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 439.

\(^{36}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 245.

\(^{37}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 374.

\(^{38}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 404.

\(^{39}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 374.

\(^{40}\) Al-Maturidi, Ta’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 563.
Abi Bakr (d. 58/677), Hafsah binti ‘Umar (d. 45/665), Anas bin Malik (d. 93/711), al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728), Qatadah bin Di’amah (d. 117/735) and so on.

When al-Maturidi interprets the Qur’an, he often mentions various viewpoints, sometimes over ten viewpoint, regardless their opinions are similar or dissimilar to his opinion. Presumably, this attitude stems from his standpoint that the meaning between the term ُtafsir and ُTa’wil is not the same. ُTa’wil, he argues, is the effort to define the meaning of Qur’anic verses precisely. While ُTa’wil is only the effort to pick out one of many alternative meaning without defining exactly which one the truest is. Relying on this sharp differentiation, we can understand why al-Maturidi deliberately entitles his work ُTa’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah or ُTa’wilat Alquran not ُTafsir Ahl al-Sunnah or ُTafsir Alquran.

Consequently, as said by al-Maturidi, every word in the Qur’an has many probable meanings whose truth are tentative and uncertain because no one knows the truest meaning of the Quranic verses, except Allah, the Omniscient. Therefore, al-Maturidi often closes his quotations with the following statements: ُwa bi Allah al-tawfiq (and the assistance is from Allah), ُwa Allah musta’an (and Allah is the only One whose help is sought), ُwa la quwwah illa bi Allah (and there is no power, except from Allah), ُwa Allah a’lam (and Allah is the Omniscient), ُwa Allah a’lam bi ma arad (and Allah is the Omniscient on its meaning), ُwa bi Allah al-muwaffiq (and Allah is the helper) and ُwa bi Allah al-‘ismah (and the protection is from Allah).

Al-Maturidi usually behaves critically toward these dissimilar opinions and views. Sometimes he followes the truest view, but sometimes he rejects the falsest view depends on his best analysis. Besides relying his interpretations on the Qur’an, the traditions and the sayings of companions and followers, al-Maturidi also depends his interpretations on his own thoughts. For example, his commentary on the meaning of “الحي القيوم” in the following verse.

Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. (QS. 2: 255).

The word “الحي” means that Allah is the Living. He will never die forever, He is different from His creations who cannot avoid themselves from the death. The person who really lives (FULAN HAYY) is everyone who has both glory and esteem. In this sense, the earth of Allah is called حيّة because is not static, but always

---

41 Al-Maturidi, ُTa’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 302.
42 Al-Maturidi, ُTa’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 302.
43 Al-Maturidi, ُTa’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 370.
44 Al-Maturidi, ُTa’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 79-80.
45 Al-Maturidi, ُTa’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 99-100.
46 See his commentary on the meaning of ُAlif Lam Mim in QS. 2: 1. Al-Maturidi, ُTa’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 33-36.
47 Al-Maturidi, ُTa’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 5-6.
48 Al-Maturidi, ُTa’wilat Ahl al-Sunnah, 9, 11, 13, 26, 36, 85, 91 and 113.
dynamic, fertile and productive. It yields many crops and harvests bountifully, hence it has a high position and rank in the sight of all creatures. Therefore, Allah is be worthy of His title “al-hayy” because of his great honor.

Whereas, Allah was called al-qayyum (the Self-subsisting and the Everlasting) because He will never forget or overlook everything and there is nothing cannot itself from the stare of Allah. In this respect, it is similar to the Arabic sentence ‘fulan qaim ‘ala marr fulan” which means somebody who always stares another person on all of his matters.49

The second, al-Maturidi is not an excessive interpreter in using grammatical analysis to interpret the Qur’anic verses. His linguistic scrutiny is not disproportionate too because it corresponds with the necessity which requires to utilize the grammatical analysis proportionally without excessiveness. Besides, he also almost never relies his argumentation on the poems that is usually used in the grammatical analysis. Perhaps, the main purpose of his attitude is just to prove among the readers that such grammatical exegesis is acceptable to interpret the Qur’anic verses. The following verse can become the example.

And behold, We said to the angels: “Bow down to Adam:” and they bowed down: not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject Faith. (QS. 2:34).

The composition “fasajadu illa iblis” which is not arranged with istithma’ (the exception) from mustathna minh (the word that used as the source of exception) are tolerable in the syntactical viewpoint. This is similar to the sentence (The citizens of Kufa enter this house except the man from Medina). Consequently, the God’s command to bow down to Adam is not only aimed for all angels and but also for Iblis, the Satan.50

The third, Al-Maturidi sometimes presents many styles of qirâ’ah (recitation of the Qur’an) slightly and at a glance without thorough explanation. He also does not assess the category of each qirâ’ah. Besides, he rarely mentions the people who are treated as the sources of qirâ’ah. Among of them are ‘Abd Allah bin Mas’ud (d. 32/652), ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abbas (d. 68/687), Ubayy bin Ka’b (d. 31/651), al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728) and Muqatil bin Sulayman (d. 150/767). Here is the example of his interpretation.

So beseech thy Lord for us to produce for us of what the earth groweth its potherbs, and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils and onions.” (QS. 2:61).

The word “fum” the verse above can be understood as “thum” (garlic) because ‘Abd Allah bin Mas’ud reads “wa fumiha” with “wa thumiha”. Besides, it also can be interpreted as “burr” (wheat).51
The fourth, Al-Maturidi can be categorized as a cautious exegete who seldom takes *Isra‘iliyyat* (the Judeo-Christian traditions and tales)\(^{52}\) to interpret the Qur’anic verses. When he deals with the verses that contain the ancient and old stories, such as the stories of messengers, he occasionally mentions those stories based on several sources, but at the end of his quotations he often declares his hesitation about the truth of them. Hence, he disbelieves in them accurately because of their uncertainties.

Moreover, al-Maturidi always says that the desire to know more in detail about those stories is an exaggerated viewpoint and unusable attitude that should not be done by the interpreter. In his opinion, the appearance of such sketchy stories in the Qur’an actually can become an adequate evidence to show clearly that the words of God given to Muhammad are truthfully the revelation of Allah. Indeed, Muhammad definitely could not know anything about all of stories, that are appropriately also mentioned in the Old Testament and the Gospel, if he did not get the true guidance and revelation from Allah.

The following verse is the example to elucidate and support al-Maturidi’s point of view.

So We said: “Strike the (body) with a piece of the (heifer).” Thus Allah bringeth the dead to life and showeth you His Signs: perchance ye may understand. (QS. 2: 73).

After talking about several commentaries that interpret the meaning of “ba‘diha” (a piece of it) as a right thigh, al-Maturidi utters obviously that truth of those interpretations cannot be validated exactly. The factual information that should be taken is only from the Qur’anic verse above, although it seems to be very pithy and asserted in brief.\(^{53}\)

The fifth, in relation to the study on his *Ta‘wilat Ahl al-Sunnah* and *Kitab Tawhid*, it is can be concluded that al-Maturidi is not just a theologian, but also an exegetist who prefers *tawassul* (nonaligned and independent standpoint) when dealing with many different viewpoints among the theologians. Hence, this neutral attitude categorizes the Maturidites as a moderate *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ‘ah* school of thought. Although this position looks like the Ash‘arites, another group of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamâ‘ah*, in fact there are several minor differences between the Maturidites and the Ash‘arites that do not correlate with the main theological problems.\(^{54}\)

For instance, the Mu‘tazilites believe that Allah does not have any attribute such as ‘ilm (knowledge), qudrah (power), sam’ (listen), basar (seeing), hayat (life), baqa’ (eternity) and iradah (wish). On the contrary, the Hashwites believe that Allah really

---

\(^{52}\) According to the number of *Isra‘iliyyat* tales that mentioned in the exegesis, there are two groups of exegetes, namely, [1] the exegetes who mention *Isra‘iliyyat* a lot, such as Muhammad bin Jarir al-Tabari (d. 310/923), and [2] the exegetes who almost never mention *Isra‘iliyyat*, such as al-Hafiz Isma’il bin Kathir (d. 774/1372). See Fayd, *Manhaj Ibn ‘Atiyyah*, 181.


\(^{54}\) See the preface of *Kitab al-Tawhid*, 11-13.
has those attributes as well as His creatures. On the other hand, the Ash’arites believe that Allah has those attributes, but His attributes differ from those of His creatures.\textsuperscript{55} Like the Ash’arites, al-Maturidi conveys his point of view that Allah surely has the attributes which are not similar to the attributes of His creatures because Allah has declared that nothing is like Him (\textit{laytha ka mithlih shay’}).\textsuperscript{56}

That is one of his moderate standpoints toward the distinctions of theological views. Probably, whoever wants to know more detailed about his views should read his \textit{Kitab al-Tawhid} that specifically explains a lot about many theological problems. In addition to his work, we also can read two comprehensive dissertations. Both are \textit{‘Aqidat al-Islâm wa al-Imam al-Maturidi} (the Belief of Islam and al-Imam al-Maturidi) by Ayyub ‘Ali and \textit{Imâm Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-‘jam‘ah: Abu Mansur al-Maturidi wa Ara’üh al-Kalâmiyyah} (the Leader of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-‘jam‘ah: al-Imam al-Maturidi and his theological views) by al-Maghribi.

The sixth, Al-Maturidi tends to follow the Hanafite school of thought in dealing with jurisprudential Qur’anic verses. This tendency appears obviously when his legal views are compared with the views of Hanafite followers, such as Abu Bakr Ahmad al-Razi al-Jassas. This comparison shows that there are many similarities between their jurisprudential thought, despite \textit{Ahkam Alquran} gives the larger scope and greater extent than \textit{Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah} to discuss the jurisprudential problems. Perhaps this al-Maturidi’s inclination relates to his academic sequence that referred to Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767), as depicted previously.

By relying the argumentations on the fairly similar sources, either al-Maturidi or the Hanafite scholars assert the following thoughts. The words “\textit{bismillah al-rahman al-rahim}” are regarded as a Qur’anic verse, but they are not a part of al-Fatihah\textsuperscript{57} and performing prayer without recitation of al-Fatihah does not break the prayer and still makes the prayer legitimate.\textsuperscript{58} The sorcerer who rejects to apologize from his sins is classified as an infidel and can be killed because he is consider as an apostate from Islam.\textsuperscript{59} Performing \textit{sa‘i} (running between the hills of Sofa and Marwa) and \textit{tawaf} (circumambulation of the Ka’bah seven times) is an obligation for the pilgrims, although it is not an essential principles of pilgrimage. Therefore, it must be changed with \textit{dam} (fine) if it is not done.\textsuperscript{60} Performing \textit{umrah} (pilgrimage to Mecca that is not during the pilgrimage season by omitting some of the ritual, e.g. the visit to the fields of Arafah) is favorable \textit{(sunnah)}.\textsuperscript{61} Performing \textit{ihram

\textsuperscript{56} Al-Maturidi, \textit{Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah}, 14, 305, 587, 592 and \textit{Kitab al-Tawhid}, 23-25, 44.
\textsuperscript{57} Al-Maturidi, \textit{Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah}, 16-18 and al Jassas, \textit{Ahkam Alquran}, vol. 01, 12-16.
\textsuperscript{58} Al-Maturidi, \textit{Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah}, 20-22 and al Jassas, \textit{Ahkam Alquran}, vol. 01, 18-32.
\textsuperscript{59} Al-Maturidi, \textit{Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah}, 207-208 and al Jassas, \textit{Ahkam Alquran}, vol. 01, 71-78.
\textsuperscript{60} Al-Maturidi, \textit{Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah}, 301-302 and al Jassas, \textit{Ahkam Alquran}, vol. 01, 136-139.
\textsuperscript{61} Al-Maturidi, \textit{Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah}, 397-399 and al Jassas, \textit{Ahkam Alquran}, vol. 01, 362-367.
(consecration for use in the pilgrimage) before the months of pilgrimage come is allowable, but it is unfavorable (makruh).  

The seventh, al-Maturidi has an independent and brave standpoint when making interpretation to the Qur’anic verses. That standpoint is that he applies asbab al-nuzul (the causes of revelation) loosely and slackly. Hence, he utilizes the situations and phenomena surrounding revelation, including the context and factual circumstances in which each verse was revealed, proportionally and does not keep away from them at all. He takes into account the principle al-‘ibrah bi ‘umum al-lafz la bi khusus al-sabab (the focused concern is the general statement and not the specific cause). The following verse is the example.

When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their (Iddat), do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands, if they mutually agree on equitable terms. (QS. 2: 232).

Talking about the sentence “fa la ta’duluhunn an yankihna azwajahunn” (do not prevent them from marrying their former husbands), Al-Maturidi says that this verse explicitly explains to us not to disallow the marriage of all divorced women from marrying both their former husbands and new husbands, regardless of its revelation that specifically related to the sister of Ma’qil bin al-Muzani who has been divorced by her husband. After her iddah has ended, her former husband wanted to marry her again, but her family prohibited his desire. Hence, this verse was finally revealed.

Conclusion

Those are seven characteristics or features of Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah that undoubtedly can evidence the competency and proficiency of al-Maturidi in the Qur’anic exegesis. Therefore, after considering this reasonable fact, it is right to conclude that al-Maturidi is not only a foremost theologian, but also a skillful and dexterous exegete.

---

63 Al-Maturidi, Ta’wîlat Ahl al-Sunnah, 514. This occurrence is mentioned in the prophet traditions such as Sahih al-Bukhari.
REFERENCE


Al-Dhahabi, Muhammad Husayn. al-Tafsîr wa al-Mufassirûn, vol. 1, Cairo: Dar al-

_______. al-Ittijâhât al-Munharifah fî Tafsîr Al-Qur’ân al-Karêm. Kuwait: Dar al-
Itísam, 1976.


Amin, Ahmad. Ţuhr al-Islâm, vol. 01, Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta’lîf wa al-Tarjama wa al-
Nashr, 1952.

Fayd, Abd al-Wahhab. Manhaj Ibn ‘Atiyyah fî Tafsîr Al-Qur’ân al-’Azîm, Kairo: Al-

Ibn ‘Asakir, Abu al-Qasim ‘Ali bin Hibat Allah. Tabyîn Kâdîhîb al-Muṣṭara, (Beirut: Dar al-
Kutub al-‘Arabi, 1983.


Khalîfah, Mustâfî bin ‘Abd Allah Haji. Kâshîf al-Ţûnûn ‘an Asami al-Kutub wa al-


Al-Maqdisi, Sham al-Din Muhammad bin Ahmad. Ahsan al-Taqâsim fi Ma’rifat al-


Al-Qâfuji, Sadiq bin Husayn. Abhîd al-‘Ulâm, vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-

Al-Qurashi, Muhammad bin Abî al-Wafa’. Tabaqât al-Hanafîyyah, vol. 1, Karachi:
Mir Muhammad Kutub Khan, t.t.


Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, t.t.
