THE METHODOLOGY OF AL-MĀTURĪDĪ'S QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS:
Study of *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*

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Abstract

According to Islamic theology, al-Māturīdī is one of the three prominent Muslim theologians of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah who are called aqṭāb madhhab Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah *(the leaders of Sunnite school of thought). In addition to his reputation as a theologian, al-Māturīdī actually was competent in various Islamic sciences. In Qura'nic exegesis, he has* Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah *or* Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān. *Unfortunately, this fact isn't known well by Islamic researchers. This article is going to elucidate the features of his work that encompass at least seven characteristics. Al-Māturīdī prefers to combine the* naqlī *(traditional) and* 'aqlī *(rational) sources. Consequently, it can be identified as* tafsīr bi'l-izdiwāj *or the exegesis that amalgamates* tafsīr bi'l-ma'thūr *(traditional exegesis) with* tafsīr bi'l-ra'y *(rational exegesis). He is not an interpreter who uses excessive grammatical analysis to interpret the Qura'nic verses. He sometimes presents many styles of* qirā'ah *(recitation of the Qur'an) without thorough explanation. He almost never uses* Isrā'īliyyāt *(the Judeo-Christian traditions and tales) to interpret the Qura'nic verses. He favors* tawassuṭ *(nonaligned and independent standpoint) when he deals with different viewpoints among theologians. He tends to follow the Ḥanafite school of thought in discussing the jurisprudential Qura'nic verses. He applies* asbāb al-nuzūl *(the causes of revelation) loosely.*

Keywords: Qura'nic studies, Qura'nic Exegesis, al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*.

Ahmad Choirul Rofiq

A. Introduction

The history of Islam can be divided into three periods, the classical period (30-648 / 650-1250), the middle period (648-1215 / 1250-1800) and the modern period (since 1215 / 1800). In its history, Islam has had two golden ages, namely, the first and the second golden ages. The first golden age can be found in the classical period when the expansion and the integration of Islamic government occurred before the prophet Muḥammad (may God bless and grant him salvation) died in 11/632, and continued under the administration of Rāshidūn (rightly guided) caliphs (13-35 / 634-661) and Ummayad dynasty (41-132 / 661-750). The second golden age took place in the middle period, marked by the 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 age, there were three prominent Muslim theologians of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah school of thought, i.e. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 330/941) in Baṣrah, Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) in Samarqand (Transoxiana) and Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933) in Egypt.[2]

Additionally, Jalāl Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Mūsā said that those three Islamic scholars were also called *aqṭāb madhhab Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* (the leaders of Sunnite school of thought) which encompassed al-Ash'arī, al-Māturīdī and al-Ṭaḥāwī,[3] although among the followers of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, or most Muslim people generally, including Indonesian citizens, if there is a consensus of opinion, it is that their major theologians on *kalām* are al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī. It

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[1] For further explanation about the periods of Islamic history, see Harun Nasution, *Islam Ditinjau dari Berbagai Aspeknya,* vol. 1 (Jakarta: UI Press, 1978), pp. 56-89.

[2] 'Ali 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Maghribī, *Imām Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah: Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī wa Ārā'uh al-Kalāmiyyah* (Egypt: Maktabah Wahbah, 1985), p. 5. See also Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad Ayyūb 'Ali, *'Aqīdat al-Islām wa'l-Imām al-Māturīdī* (Bangladesh: al-Muassasah al-Islāmiyyah, 1983), p. 256.

[3] Jalāl Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Mūsā, *Nash'at al-Ash'ariyyah wa-Taṭawwuruhā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Lubnānī, 1975), p. 281.

[4] See the appendix of *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah* (Baghdad: al-Irshād, 1983), p. 693.

seems al-Ṭaḥāwī is unlucky because his name has been nearly forgotten in the study of *kalām*.

Besides his popularity in *kalām*, al-Māturīdi also has many works on different subjects. In total, his works number over 24 titles. There are two titles on *tafsīr* (Qura'nic exegesis) and *tajwīd* (proper pronunciation for correct recitation of the Qur'an), 4 titles on *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), 12 titles on *kalām*, 1 title on *taṣawwuf* (sufism) and five titles on other various themes.[4]

Al-Māturīdi's book on Qura'nic exegesis is entitled *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah* (the Sunnite interpretations) that is widely known as *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān* (the Qura'nic interpretations). The book, written by this *Imām al-Mutakallimīn* (leader of theologians) and *Ra'īs Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* (mentor of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah), is found in several places, including the Turkish libraries in Istanbul, Egyptian library of Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah in Cairo, Syrian library of Dār al-Kutub al-Ẓāhiriyyah in Damascus, British Museum in London and Berlin library in Germany.[5] However, comprehensive discussions of this book are rarely seen. Moreover, few Qura'nic studies mention the name of al-Māturīdi as a Qura'nic exegete.

Aḥmad al-Shirbāṣī, when explaining the levels of Sunnite exegetes, did not allude to al-Māturīdi, but instead remarked on al-Ash'arī, another theologian who lived at the time of al-Māturīdi. Drawing on the work of al-Faḍl ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭibrishī, a Syi'ite priest, al-Shirbāṣī gives the following explanation.

The first group of exegetes, from Muḥammad's companions, were 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and other companions. The second group of exegetes were Alī ibn Abī Ṭalḥah, Qays ibn Muslim al-Kūfi, Mujāhid ibn Jubayr al-Makkī, Qatādah ibn Di'āmah al-Sadūsī, Ismā'īl ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sidī, 'Ikrimah ibn Mawlā ibn 'Abbās, Ṭawūs ibn Kisān al-Yamanī, 'Aṭa' ibn Abī Rabbāḥ al-Makkī, Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ja'fi, Muḥammad ibn Sa'īd al-Ka'bī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mālik ibn Anas, 'Āmir al-Sha'bī, 'Aṭā' ibn Abī Salamah, Sulaymān ibn Mahrān al-A'mash, Abū al-'Āliyah Rāfi' ibn

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[5] See the preface of *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah* written by Muḥammad Mustafiḍ al-Raḥmān, pp. 3-4.

Mahrān al-Riyāhī, al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim, 'Aṭiyyah ibn Saʿīd al-'Awfī, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr and so on. On the next level were Abū Muslim Ismāʿīl ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kūfī (known as al-Sidī), Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd al-Kalbī, Abū Ḥamzah al-Thimalī and Abū Baṣīr al-Asadī. In the second century after hegira, there were 'Abd al-Mālik ibn Jurayj al-Makkī al-Umawī, Zayd ibn Aslam al-'Adwī, Muqātil al-Azdī, Wāqi' ibn Jarrāḥ al-Kūfī and Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Wāqidī. In the third century after hegira, there were Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Khālid al-Barqī, 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qūmmī, Ibn Mājah Muḥammad ibn Yazīd al-Qazwaynī and al-Ash'aj Abū Saʿīd ibn Rawwāḥah. In the fourth century after hegira, there were al-Nisābūrī, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (a leader of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah), 'Alī ibn 'Īsā al-Rūmānī, Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Kūfī, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ibn Fūrak.[6]

The assertion that al-Ash'arī is an exegete is also followed by Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī in his *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn* (the exegesis and exegetes). He declared that the name of al-Ash'arī's Qura'nic exegesis was *al-Mukhtazin* (the treasure storage).[7]

However, Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, in *Mabāḥith fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān,* did not include al-Māturīdī's name as an interpreter. The Qura'nic interpretations and their interpreters from Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, according to him, are *Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb,* written by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl,* written by Nāṣir al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh al-Bayḍawī (d. 685/1286), *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Qur'ān al-Karīm,* written by Abū al-Su'ūd al-'Imādī (d. 982/1574), *Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl,* written by Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310), and *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl,* written by 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Alī al-Khāzin (d. 741/1341).[8] A similar attitude is shared by Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) in *ṭabaqāt al-mufassirīn)*[9] and Muḥammad 'Abd al-

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[6] Aḥmad al-Shirbāṣī, *Qiṣṣat al-Tafsīr* (Cairo: Dār al-Qalam, 1962), pp. 87-90.

[7] Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa'l-Mufassirūn*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1976), p. 150.

[8] Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāḥith fī Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li'l-Malāyīn, 1988), pp. 292-3.

[9] 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah).

'Aẓim al-Zarqānī in *Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*.[10]

Although al-Māturīdī was not well known as an exegete, there were some writers who acknowledged him. Among of them were Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Qurashī (d. 775/1373) in *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafiyyah*,[11] Ḥāji Khalīfah (d. 1067/1654) in *Kashf al-Ẓunūn*,[12] and Ṣadīq ibn Ḥusayn al-Qafūjī (d. 1307/1889) in *Abjad al-'Ulūm*.[13]

B. Biography of al-Māturīdī

His name was Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī.[14] He was born in Māturīd or Māturīt, a district of Samarqand.[15] His noble lineage is connected to Abū Ayyūb Khālid ibn Zayd ibn Kulayb al-Anṣārī (d. 52/672), a companion of the prophet Muhammad, from the clan of Khazraj in Medina, when Muḥammad stopped by his house in the course of the Hegira (migration) journey from Mecca to Medina. Al-Māturīdī's date of birth is still in dispute among historians, although there is a consensus that al-Māturīdī died in 333/944 and was buried in Samarqand. [16]

To make a supposition about al-Māturīdī's birth, we can relate it to the years when his teachers died. For instance, the death of Nuṣair ibn Yaḥyā al-Balkhī (d. 268/881) and Muḥammad ibn Muqātil al-Rāzī (d. 248/862). After that, we can presume that al-Māturīdī most probably was born before 248/862. Therefore, if he was ten years old when he graduated from his elementary school and then directly studied with Muḥammad ibn Muqātil al-Rāzī, he presumably was born in 238/852. If this presumption is true, it can be concluded that he lived to be almost

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[10] Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Aẓim al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), pp. 96-97.

[11] Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Wafā' al-Qurashi, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafiyyah*, vol. 1 (Karachi: Mir Muḥammad Kutub Khan), p. 130.

[12] Muṣṭafā ibn 'Abd Allāh Ḥāji Khalīfah, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn 'an Asāmī al-Kutub wa al-Funūn*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), p. 335.

[13] Ṣadīq ibn Ḥusayn al-Qafūjī, *Abjad al-'Ulūm*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1978), p. 185.

[14] Al-Qurashi, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafiyyah*, vol. 1, p. 130.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 244 and Aḥmad Amīn, *Ẓuhr al-Islām*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Lajnat al-Ta'līf wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1952), p. 265.

[16] Al-Maghrībī, *Imām Ahl al-Sunnah*, pp. 12-4.

92 years old. In addition, he was born in the reign of al-Mutawakkil (232-247 / 846-861) and was nine years old when al-Mutawakkil was assassinated in 248/862. [17]

Therefore, al-Māturīdī was born twenty-two years before the birth of al-Ash'arī (d. 330/941), who was born in 260/873,[18] although other information says that he was born in 270/883.[19] If the former option (260/873) is chosen, it can be said that al-Ash'arī began to support Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah in 300/912, because he left his teacher, Abū 'Alī Muḥammad al-Jubbāī (d. 303/915), and rejected the Mu'tazilah when he was 40 years old.[20] On the other hand, al-Māturīdī advocated Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah before 300/912.

Historians do not give details about how he got his education. It is told that he studied Islamic sciences, taking supervision from four Islamic scholars in the academic tradition of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767). They were Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Juzjānī, Abu Naṣr Aḥmad al-'Iyādī, Muḥammad ibn Muqātil al-Rāzī (d. 248/802) and Nuṣayr ibn Yaḥyā al-Balkhī (d. 268/881).

Therefore, it is unmistakable to conclude that a Ḥanafite education was taken by al-Māturīdī. His teachers were scholars who made a great contribution to spreading the Ḥanafite school of thought in two territories governed by the authority of the Sāmānite dynasty, namely, Transoxiana and Khurāsān. For this reason, it is understandable that al-Māturīdī leans towards the Ḥanafite, which at that time was the most prominent trend in society. Furthermore, he almost never travelled outside Transoxiana and Khurāsān to study. He learnt from Abu Naṣr Aḥmad al-'Iyādī in Samarqand, as well as from Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Juzjānī, Nuṣayr ibn Yaḥyā al-Balkhī and Muḥammad ibn Muqātil al-Rāzī in Khurāsan. Consequently, this refutes the assumption that al-Māturīdī has been influenced by al-Ash'arī in constructing his theological

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[17] 'Alī, *'Aqīdat al-Islām*, p. 265.

[18] Mūsā, *Nash'at al-Ash'ariyyah,* p. 165.

[19] Abu Bakr ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah,* vol. 2 (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1986), p. 113.

[20] Mūsā, *Nash'at al-Ash'ariyyah,* p. 168.

thoughts, notwithstanding the resemblances between them.[21]

The followers of al-Māturīdi conferred on him many special titles to show their admiration. Some of his titles are *Imām al-Hudā* (the leader of guidance)*, Qudwat Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Ihtidā'* (the model of those who follow the tradition and guidance)*, Rāfi' A'lām al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* (the upholder of Sunnite banners), *Qāli' Aḍālil al-Fitnah wa al-Bid'ah* (the destroyer of deviant defamation and heresy)*, Imām al-Mutakallimīn* (the leader of theologians) and *Muṣaḥḥiḥ 'Aqā'id al-Muslimīn* (the corrector of Muslims' beliefs).[22] Those honorary degrees indicate the high academic position reached by al-Māturīdi. However, there are some writers who call al-Māturīdi *The Second Great "Father" of Sunnite Theology*[23] or *The Second Great Theologian of the Sunnite*[24] because he is ranked below al-Ash'arī.

C. Al-Māturīdi's Qura'nic Exegesis

After examining al-Māturīdi's Qura'nic exegesis, it can be said that his exegesis has several characteristics or features. Here are the details.

First, there is the combination of *naqlī* (traditional) and *'aqlī* (rational) sources. The *naqlī* source consists of the Qur'an, the traditions conveyed by the prophet or his companions, whereas the *'aqlī* source stems from his thoughts (ijtihād). According to this fact, it is acceptable to say that al-Māturīdi's Qura'nic exegesis can be called *tafsīr bi al-izdiwāj* or the exegesis that amalgamates *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* (traditional exegesis) with *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (rational exegesis). This labeling is based on the categories of exegesis given by Abdul Djalal[25] because his classification is more comprehensive than the classification given by other writers,

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[21] Al-Maghrībī, *Imām Ahl al-Sunnah,* pp. 18-20, 'Ali, *'Aqīdah,* pp. 268-71, 275, al-Qurashī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafiyyah,* vol. 1, pp. 70, 130, 134, 121, 200, 246. and Shām al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālim,* vol. 1 (Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa'l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1980), p. 236.

[22] Al-Qurashī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafiyyah,* vol. 1, p. 362 and al-Maghrībī, *Imām Ahl al-Sunnah,* p. 12.

[23] G.E. Von Grunebaum, *Classical Islam,* tr. Katherine Watson (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970), p. 130.

[24] *Ibid.,* p. 207.

[25] Abdul Djalal, *Urgensi Tafsir Maudlu'i Pada Masa Kini* (Jakarta: Kalam Mulia, 1990), pp. 64-8.

Ahmad Choirul Rofiq

such as al-Zarqānī,[26] Amīr 'Abd al-'Azīz,[27] and M. Quraish Shihab.[28]

Here is the example of his commentary with the assistance of Qura'nic verses themselves.

$$\text{مَلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ}$$

[*master of the day of judgment;* QS. 1:4].

The words *"yawm al-dīn"* in this verse mean the day of reckoning and repayment for all our deeds or the judgment day. In this regard, its meaning resembles the spirit of QS. 37:53 and QS. 24:25.

$$\text{أَءِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَءِنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ}$$

[*When we die and become dust and bones, shall we indeed receive rewards and punishments?;* QS. 37:53].

$$\text{يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوَفِّيهِمُ ٱللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ ٱلْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ هُوَ ٱلْحَقُّ ٱلْمُبِينُ}$$

[*On that day Allah will pay them back (all) their just dues;* QS. 24:25].[29]

The same thing is done by al-Māturīdī when he interprets the verse:

$$\text{وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ٱدْخُلُوا۟ هَٰذِهِ ٱلْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا۟ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَٱدْخُلُوا۟ ٱلْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا۟ حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَٰيَٰكُمْ}$$

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[26] He classifies Qura'nic exegesis into *maḥmūd* (praiseworthy) and *madhmūm* (blameworthy). See al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān,* vol. 2, pp. 33-34.

[27] He classifies Qura'nic exegesis into *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y*. See Amīr 'Abd al-'Azīz, *Dirāsāt fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Damascus: Dār al-Furqān, 1983), pp. 157-160.

[28] Besides classifying Qura'nic exegesis into *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y*, he also quotes 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmawī's categrization that classifies Qura'nic exegesis into *taḥlīlī* (analytical), *ijmālī* (general), *muqārin* (comparative) and *mawḍū'ī* (thematic). See M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), pp. 83-86.

[29] Al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*, p. 14.

وَسَنَزِيدُ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

[*And remember We said: Enter this town, and eat of the plenty therein as ye wish; but enter the gate with humility, in posture and in words, and We shall forgive you your faults and increase (the portion of) those who do good*; QS. 2:58].

Al-Māturīdī says that the meaning of addition or increase in the word *sanazīd* is *"al-tawfiq bi'l-iḥsān min ba'd* (the success granted by Allah to perform goodness on the next day). This interpretation corresponds with the verse:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَٱتَّقَىٰ، وَصَدَّقَ بِٱلْحُسْنَىٰ ، فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَىٰ

[*So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah), and (in all sincerity) testifies to the best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to bliss*; QS. 92:5-7].[30]

Besides getting assistance from the Qura'nic verses, al-Māturīdī was also assisted by the prophet tradition. The main feature noticed by everyone who reads *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah* is that al-Māturīdī never mentions the transmission line of tradition *(sanad)* when he quotes the tradition. Al-Māturīdī usually uses specific terms such as *mā ruwiya 'an al-nabiyy* (the tradition that transmitted from the prophet)*, mā ruwiya 'an rasūl Allāh* (the tradition that transmitted from the messenger of Allah)*, kaqawlih ṣallā Allāh 'alayh wa sallam* (for instance, the saying of Muhammad PBUH)*, li mā ruwiya fī al-khabar* (like as transmitted in the tradition)*, mā jāa 'an rasūl Allāh* (the tradition that comes from the messenger of Allah)*, dalīluh qawluh ṣallā Allāh 'alayh wa sallam* (its argument is the saying of Muhammad PBUH)*, wa fī ba'ḍ al-akhbār* (and in some traditions)*, mā jāa fī al-khabar* (the argument that stated in the tradition) and *dhukir fī al-khabar* (said in the tradition).[31]

Therefore, it is understandable if there are many questions about the reasons why al-Māturīdī does not mention any ascription of transmission line *(sanad)* in his commentary, although he surely knows that *sanad* is one of the important elements that should not be abandoned

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9, 226, 322, 385, 417, 479, 526, and 634.

in checking the reliability of tradition. Moreover, according to al-Dhahabī, the discarding of *sanad*, the customary practice among exegetes, has a negative effect on *al-waḍ'* (falsifying tradition) in interpretation and creates many amalgamations between *ṣaḥīḥ* (reliable tradition) and *mawḍū'* (counterfeit tradition). Furthermore, it also makes *Isrā'īliyyāt* (the Judeo-Christian traditions and tales) spread out widely.[32]

Perhaps the question above cannot be answered exactly, except by al-Māturīdī himself. However, it is tolerable if we make a presumption on his motivation. Presumably al-Māturīdī intends to abandon the *sanad* because he does not want the attention of his commentary readers to be focused on the insignificant things and then not remember the most considerable ones. Besides, al-Māturīdī surely has known that there were many Islamic scholars who had not only paid attention to the traditions of the prophet but also collected and written them in specific books, such as Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Bukhārī (d. 256/869) and Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Nisābūrī (d. 261/874), whose residence, namely, Bukhārā and Nishapur, by coincidence is not far from Samarqand, the birthplace of al-Māturīdī.

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

وَٱلْمُطَلَّقَٰتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَٰثَةَ قُرُوٓءٍ

[*Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods*; QS.2:228].

The words "*thalāthah qurū'*" above, according to al-Māturīdī's interpretation, are similar to *thalāthah ḥayḍ* (three periods of menstruation). Even though it also can be interpreted as *thalāthah aṭhār* (three periods of cleanness), but the appropriate meaning is *thalāthah ḥayḍ* because this meaning is the same as mentioned in the tradition that the prophet Muhammad PBUH said, *"The waiting period for a slave widow is two periods of menstruation"*. Two periods of menstruation in that tradition are a part of the waiting period for a free widow. Hence, the proper

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[32] Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Ittijāhāt al-Munḥarifah fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Kuwait: Dār al-I'tiṣām, 1976), p. 14.

interpretation for this verse is three periods of menstruation.[33]

He also supports his commentary with the tradition when he explains the following verse:

$$ ٱلطَّلَٰقُ مَرَّتَانِ ۖ فَإِمْسَاكٌۢ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌۢ بِإِحْسَٰنٍ $$

[*A divorce is only permissible twice; after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness;* QS. 2:229].

According to his point of view, the words *"tasrīḥ bi-iḥsān"* (separate with kindness) in that verse can be interpreted with *"taṭlīqah thālithah"* (the third divorce) based on the saying of prophet Muḥammad: *huwa al-taṭlīqah al-thālithah* (it is the third divorce).[34]

In addition to the tradition, al-Māturīdī also refers to the statements of the prophet's companions. One of those companions, whose statements were frequently quoted by al-Māturīdī, is 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687). For example, when al-Māturīdī interprets the following verse.

$$ ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ $$

[*Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds;* QS. 1:2].

The words *al-ḥamd li-Allāh* (praise be to Allah) cannot be only interpreted as Allah praising 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-ḥamd* is attributed to Allah, it contains implicitly the obligation for us to express gratitude to Allah, the Almighty. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās says that *al-ḥamd li Allāh* means *al-shukr li Allāh bi mā ṣana' ilā khalqih* (all gratitudes are to Allah for His

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[33] Al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*, 493. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ mentions this tradition with two transmission lines, i.e. both from 'Ā'ishah and Ibn 'Umar. See Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,* vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1993), pp. 499-500.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 150. In dealing with this tradition, there are two version, i.e. [1] transmitted by Waqi', 'Abd al-Razzāq, Sa'īd ibn Manṣūr, Aḥmad, 'Abdullāh ibn Ḥamīd, Abū Dāwud, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Nuḥḥās, Ibn Mardawyh and al-Bayhaqī from Abū Razīn al-Asadī from the messenger of Allah, and [2] transmitted by Ibn Mardawyh and al-Bayhaqī from Anas ibn Mālik from the messenger of Allah. See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr,* vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1990), p. 495.

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bestowal to His creatures). Besides, the command to express gratitude can be found in the tradition that talks about how the prophet expressed his gratitude by doing the prayer thoroughly until the soles of his feet became puffy. Therefore, those who submit and obey Allah's orders are akin to those who express gratitude to Allah.[35]

The other companions and followers whose viewpoints and outlooks are also alluded to by al-Māturīdī are Abū Bakr (d. 13/634),[36] 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/643),[37] 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (d. 35/655),[38] 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/660),[39] 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd (d. 32/652),[40] Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (d. 44/664),[41] 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar (d. 73/692),[42] Ubayy ibn Ka'b (d. 31/651),[43] 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr (d. 73/692),[44] Abū Hurayrah (d. 59/678),[45] Ḥasan ibn 'Alī (d. 50/670),[46] 'Āishah binti Abī Bakr (d. 58/677),[47] Ḥafṣah binti 'Umar (d. 45/665),[48] Anas ibn Mālik (d. 93/711),[49] al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728),[50] Qatādah ibn Di'āmah (d. 117/735)[51] and so on.

When al-Māturīdī interprets the Qur'an, he often mentions various viewpoints, sometimes over ten viewpoints,[52] regardless of whether their

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[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9;

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِيَقُومُ لِيُصَلِّيَ حَتَّى تَرِمَ قَدَمَاهُ أَوْ سَاقَاهُ فيُقَالُ لَهُ فيَقُولُ أَفلا أَكُونُ عَبْدا شَكُورا

This tradition is written by Muḥammad ibn Isma'īl al-Bukhārī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987), p. 380.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 450.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 488-9.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 412.

[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 155 and 398.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 439.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 404.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 563.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 302.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 302.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 370.

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

[52] See his commentary on the meaning of [ألم] in QS. 2: 1. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-36.

opinions are similar or dissimilar to his opinion. Presumably, this attitude stems from his standpoint that the meanings of the terms *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* are not the same. *Tafsīr*, he argues, is the effort to define the meaning of Qura'nic verses precisely, whereas *ta'wīl* is only the effort to pick out one of many alternative meanings without defining exactly which one is the truest meaning. Relying on this sharp differentiation, we can understand why al-Māturīdī deliberately entitles his work *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah* or *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*, not *Tafāsīr Ahl al-Sunnah* or *Tafāsīr al-Qur'ān*.[53]

Consequently, as said by al-Māturīdī, 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-Māturīdī often closes his quotations with the following statements: *wa bi Allāh al-tawfiq* (and the assistance is from Allah), *wa Allāh musta'ān* (and Allah is the only One whose help is sought), *wa lā quwwah illā bi Allāh* (and there is no power, except from Allah), *wa Allāh a'lam* (and Allah is the Omniscient), *wa Allāh a'lam bi mā arād* (and Allah is the Omniscient on its meaning), *wa bi Allāh al-ma'ūnah wa al-'iṣmah* (and both the assistance and protection are from Allah), *wa Allāh al-muwaffiq* (and Allah is the helper) and *wa bi Allāh al-'iṣmah* (and the protection is from Allah).[54]

Al-Māturīdī is usually critical towards dissimilar opinions and views. Sometimes he follows the truest view, but sometimes he rejects the most false view, depending on his best analysis.

Besides basing his interpretations on the Qur'an, the traditions and the sayings of companions and followers, al-Māturīdī also bases his interpretations on his own thoughts *(ijtihād)*. For example, there is his commentary on the meaning of *"al-ḥayy al-qayyūm"* in the following verse.

$$ ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ٱلۡحَىُّ ٱلۡقَيُّومُ $$

[*Allah! There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal;* QS. 2:255].

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[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 11, 13, 26, 36, 85, 91, and 113.

The word *"al-ḥayy"* means that Allah is the Living. He will never die, He is different from His creations who cannot avoid death. The person who really lives *(fulān ḥayy)* is the one who has both glory and esteem. In this sense, the earth of Allah is called *ḥayyah* because it is not static, but always dynamic, fertile and productive. It yields bountiful crops and harvests, hence it has a high position and rank in the sight of all creatures. Therefore, Allah is worthy of His title *"al-ḥayy"* because of his great honor.

Whereas, Allah was called *al-qayyūm* (the Self-subsisting and the Everlasting) because He will never forget or overlook anything and there is nothing that can free itself from the stare of Allah. In this respect, it is similar to the Arabic sentence *"fulān qāʾim ʿalā marr fulān"* which means somebody who always stares at another person in all of his matters.[55]

Second, al-Māturīdī is not an interpreter who uses excessive grammatical analysis to interpret the Qura'nic verses. His linguistic scrutiny is not disproportionate because it corresponds to the necessity required to utilize grammatical analysis without excessiveness. Besides, he also almost never bases his argumentation on the poems that are usually used in grammatical analysis. Perhaps, the main purpose of his attitude is to prove to the readers that such grammatical exegesis is acceptable for interpreting the Qura'nic verses. The following verses are examples.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَٰئِكَةِ ٱسْجُدُوا۟ لِءَادَمَ فَسَجَدُوٓا۟ إِلَّآ إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ

وَٱسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ

[*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 *"fa-sajadū illā iblīs"* which is not arranged with *istithnā'* (the exception) from *mustathnā minh* (the word that is used as the source of exception) is tolerable from a syntactical viewpoint. This is similar to the sentence "The citizens of Kufa enter this house except the man from Medina". Consequently, God's command to bow down

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[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 587-8.

to Adam is not only aimed for all angels and but also for Iblis, the Satan.[56]

وَمَثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ كَمَثَلِ ٱلَّذِى يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَآءً وَنِدَآءً ۚ صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْىٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

[*The parable of those who reject faith is as if one were to shout like a goat-herd, to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries; deaf, dumb, and blind, they are void of wisdom;* QS. 2:171].

Al-Māturīdī says that the word *yan'iq* has two meanings, i.e. [1] *yashūt* (to call(and [2] *yun'aq* (to be called) because the active form *(fā'il)* in this verse means the passive form *(maf'ūl).* This grammatical case is similar to the meaning of *'ayshah rāḍiyah* or *'ayshah marḍiyyah* which means pleasant life.[57]

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱعْتَدَوْاْ مِنكُمْ فِى ٱلسَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُواْ قِرَدَةً خَٰسِئِينَ

[*And well ye knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath; We said to them: "Be ye apes, and rejected."* QS. 2:65].

Al-Māturīdī explains that although the word *khāsi'* (despised) means *ṣaghīr* (trifle), *dhalīl* (humble) and *ba'īd* (distant), its meanings actually refer to the same connotation, i.e. despicable or contemptible.[58]

Third, al-Māturīdī sometimes presents many styles of *qirā'ah* (recitation of the Qur'an) at a glance and without thorough explanation. He also does not assess the category of each *qirā'ah*. Besides, he rarely mentions the people who are considered as the sources of *qirā'ah*. Among of them are 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd (d. 32/652), 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687), Ubayy ibn Ka'b (d. 31/651), al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 150/767). Here is an example of his interpretation.

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[56] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[57] *Ibid.,* p. 320.
[58] *Ibid.,* p. 164.

فَٱدْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنبِتُ ٱلْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا
وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا

[*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 *"fūm"* in the verse above can be understood as *"thūm"* (garlic) because 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd reads *"wa fūmihā"* with *"wa thūmihā"*. Besides, it also can be interpreted as *"burr"* (wheat).[59] We can read another example of al-Māturīdī's commentary of the following verses.

فَإِنْ ءَامَنُوا۟ بِمِثْلِ مَآ ءَامَنتُم بِهِۦ فَقَدِ ٱهْتَدَوا۟ ۖ وَّإِن تَوَلَّوْا۟ فَإِنَّمَا
هُمْ فِى شِقَاقٍ ۖ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ ۚ وَهُوَ ٱلسَّمِيعُ ٱلْعَلِيمُ

[*So if they believe and ye believe, they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism; but Allah will suffice thee as against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing;* QS. 2:137].

Al-Māturīdī says that 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās and 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd recite *"fa in āmanū bi-mithl mā āmantum bih"* with *"fa in āmanū bi'l-ladhī āmantum bih"*. Hence, it is acceptable if the verse *laytha kamithlih shay'* (QS. 42:11) is recited as *laytha mithluh shay'* because the letter *"ka"* is regarded as *zā'idah* (additional letter).[60]

كَانَ ٱلنَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ
وَأَنزَلَ مَعَهُمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ بِٱلْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ ٱلنَّاسِ فِيمَا ٱخْتَلَفُوا۟
فِيهِ

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[59] *Ibid.*, p. 156. According to al-Ṭabarī, the changing recitation from Ibn Mas'ūd above is because of their *makhraj* (articulation of sound). See Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), p. 352.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 265 and al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 1, p. 352.

[*Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed;* QS. 2:213].

Al-Māturīdi explains that the word *liyaḥkum* in this verse can also be recited as *litaḥkum,* hence Muḥammad will be the person who judges between people in their matters. But if we recite it with *liyaḥkum,* it is more appropriate with the verse:

وَمِن قَبْلِهِۦ كِتَٰبُ مُوسَىٰٓ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً ۚ وَهَٰذَا كِتَٰبٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ

لِّسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّيُنذِرَ ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا۟ وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ

[*And before this, was the Book of Moses as a guide and a mercy; and this Book confirms (it) in the Arabic tongue; to admonish the unjust, and as glad tidings to those who do right;* QS. 46:12].[61]

Fourth, al-Māturīdi can be categorized as a cautious exegete who seldom uses *Isrā'īliyyāt* (the Judeo-Christian traditions and tales)[62] to interpret the Qura'nic 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 does not believe in their accuracy because of their uncertainties.

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

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[61] *Ibid.*, p. 441. Al-Ṭabarī doesn't mention this recitation, but he mentions another recitation, i.e. *"fī mā ikhtalafū fīh"* is recited by Ibn Mas'ūd with *"fī mā ikhtalafū 'anh"*. See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān,* vol. 2, 349.

The following verses elucidate and support al-Māturīdī's point of view. Al-Māturīdī confirms his attitude towards *Isrāʾīliyyāt* by interpreting the verse:

وَقُلْنَا يَـٰٓـَٔادَمُ ٱسْكُنْ أَنتَ وَزَوْجُكَ ٱلْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ
شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَـٰذِهِ ٱلشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ ٱلظَّـٰلِمِينَ

[*We said: "O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression." QS. 2:35*].

According to al-Māturīdī, the real meaning and essence of *jannah* (garden) and *shajarah* (tree) are unknown and we do not have to know them precisely.[63] A similar attitude is also seen when al-Māturīdī explains the verse:

فَقُلْنَا ٱضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يُحْىِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْمَوْتَىٰ وَيُرِيكُمْ
ءَايَـٰتِهِۦ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

[*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 *"baʿḍihā"* (*a piece of it*) to be the right thigh, al-Māturīdī utters what is obviously the truth, that those interpretations cannot be validated exactly. The factual information that should be taken is only from the Quraʾnic verse above, although it seems to be very pithy and asserted in brief.[64]

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[62] According to the number of *Isrāʾīliyyāt* tales that mentioned in the exegesis, there are two groups of exegetes, namely, [1] the exegetes who mention *Isrāʾīliyyāt* a lot, such as Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), and [2] the exegetes who almost never mention *Isrāʾīliyyāt*, such as al-Ḥāfiẓ Ismāʾīl ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372). See Abd al-Wahhāb Fāyd, *Manhaj Ibn ʿAṭiyyah fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm* (Cairo: al-Hayʾah al-ʿĀmmah li-Shuʾūn al-Maṭābiʿ al-Amīriyyah, 1973), p. 181.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

F**ifth**, in relation to the study in his *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah* and *Kitāb Tawḥīd*, it can be concluded that al-Māturīdī is not just a theologian, but also an exegete who prefers *tawassuṭ* (nonaligned and independent standpoint) in dealing with many different viewpoints among theologians. Hence, this neutral attitude categorizes the Māturīdites as a moderate Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah school of thought. Although this position looks like the Ash'arites, another group of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, in fact there are several minor differences between the Māturīdites and the Ash'arites that do not belong to the main theological problems.[65]

For instance, the Mu'tazilites believe that Allah does not have any attributes such as *'ilm* (knowledge), *qudrah* (power), *sam'* (listen), *baṣar* (seeing), *ḥayāh* (life), *baqā'* (eternity) and *irādah* (wish). On the contrary, the Ḥashwites believe that Allah really 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.[66] Like the Ash'arites, al-Māturīdī 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 *(Laytha ka mithlih shay')*.[67]

The Ḥashwites say that Allah will be seen on the resurrection day just as we see His mankind. The Mu'tazilites and the Jahmites have faith in the impossibility of seeing Allah on the judgment day. Then al-Māturīdī and the Ash'arites state that we will see Allah on the judgment day, but we do not know exactly the real nature of how we will see Allah. Al-Māturīdī argues that Allah must have forbidden Moses and his adherents when they proposed to see Allah, or Muḥammad must have prohibited his companions when they asked about *ru'yah* (seeing) Allah.[68]

Both are examples of his moderate standpoint toward the distinctions of theological views. Probably, whoever wants to know more details about his views should read his *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* which specifically

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[65] See the preface of *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd,* pp. 11-3.

[66] Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī ibn Hibat Allāh ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1983), p. 149.

[67] Al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*, pp. 14, 305, 587, 592 and *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd,* pp. 23-5, 44.

[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 145-6; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīn,* p. 150; and *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd,* pp. 77-9.

explains a lot about many theological problems. In addition to his work, we also can read two comprehensive dissertations, *'Aqīdat al-Islām wa al-Imām al-Māturīdī* (the Belief of Islam and al-Imām al-Māturīdī) by Ayyūb 'Alī and *Imām Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah: Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī wa Ārā'uh al-Kalāmiyyah* (the Leader of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah: al-Imām al-Māturīdī and his theological views) by al-Maghribī.

Sixth, al-Māturīdī tends to follow the Ḥanafite school of thought in dealing with the jurisprudential Qura'nic verses. This tendency is apparent when his legal views are compared with the views of Hanafite followers, such as Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370/981). This comparison shows that there are many similarities between their jurisprudential thoughts, despite the fact that *Aḥkām al-Qur'ā*n has a broader scope than *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah* in discussing the jurisprudential problems. Perhaps al-Māturīdī's inclination relates to his academic training in the tradition of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), as depicted previously.

By basing arguments on fairly similar sources, al-Māturīdī and the Hanafite scholars assert the following claims. The words "*bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*" are regarded as a Qura'nic verse, but they are not part of al-Fātiḥah,[69] and so, performing prayer without the recitation of al-Fātiḥah does not break the prayer and the prayer is still legitimate.[70] The sorcerer who refuses to apologize for his sins is classified an infidel and can be killed because he is considered an apostate from Islam.[71] Performing *sa'i* (running between the hills of al-Ṣafā and al-Marwah) and *ṭawāf* (circumambulation of the Ka'bah seven times) is an obligation for pilgrims, although they are not essential principles of pilgrimage. Therefore, it must be changed with *dam* (fine) if it is not done.[72] Performing *'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 *(sunnah)*.[73] Performing *iḥram* (consecration for use in the pilgrimage) before the months of pilgrimage come is allowable,

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[69] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-8 and al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,* vol. 1, pp. 12-6.

[70] *Ibid.,* pp. 20-2 and al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,* vol. 1, pp. 18-32.

[71] *Ibid.,* pp. 207-8 and al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,* vol. 1, pp. 71-8.

[72] *Ibid.,* pp. 301-2 and al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,* vol. 1, pp. 136-9.

[73] *Ibid.,* pp. 397-9 and al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,* vol. 1, pp. 362-7.

but it is unfavorable *(makrūh)*.[74]

Seventh, al-Māturīdī has an independent and brave standpoint when he interprets the Qura'nic verses. This standpoint is that he applies *asbāb al-nuzūl* (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, proportionately and does not ignore them. He takes into account the principle *"al-'ibrah bi 'umūm al-lafẓ lā bi khuṣūṣ al-sabab"* (the focused concern is the general statement and not the specific cause). The following verses are examples.

وَإِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ ٱلنِّسَآءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَن يَنكِحْنَ
أَزْوَٰجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَٰضَوْاْ بَيْنَهُم بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ

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

Talking about the sentence *"fa lā ta'ḍulūhunn an yankiḥna azwājahunn"* (do not prevent them from marrying their former husbands), al-Māturīdī says that this verse explicitly explains to us to not disallow divorced women from marrying both their former husbands and new husbands, regardless of the fact that its revelation was specifically related to the sister of Ma'qil ibn al-Muzanī who had been divorced by her husband. After her *iddah* (legally prescribed period of waiting during which a woman may not remarry after being widowed or divorced) had ended, her former husband wanted to marry her again, but her family prohibited this. Hence, this verse was finally revealed.[75]

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[74] *Ibid.,* pp. 416-7 and al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,* vol. 1, pp. 410-8.

[75] *Ibid*, p. 514. This occurrence is mentioned in the prophet traditions such as by al-Bukhārī:

حدّثنا عبيد الله بن سعيد حدّثنا أبو عامر العقديّ حدّثنا عبّاد بن راشد حدّثنا الحسن قال حدّثني معقل بن يسار قال كانت لي أختٌ تخطب إليّ وقال إبراهيم عن يونس عن الحسن حدّثني معقل بن يسار ح حدّثنا أبو معمر حدّثنا عبد الوارث حدّثنا يونس عن الحسن أنّ أخت معقل بن يسار طلّقها زوجها فتركها حتّى انقضت عدّتها فخطبها فأبى معقلٌ فنزلت فلا تعضلوهنّ أن ينكحن أزواجهنّ

وَلَيْسَ ٱلْبِرُّ بِأَن تَأْتُوا۟ ٱلْبُيُوتَ مِن ظُهُورِهَا وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱلْبِرَّ مَنِ
ٱتَّقَىٰ ۗ وَأْتُوا۟ ٱلْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَٰبِهَا ۚ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تُفْلِحُونَ

[*It is no virtue if ye enter your houses from the back; it is virtue if ye fear Allah.
Enter houses through the proper doors; and fear Allah, that ye may prosper;* QS.
2:189].

Al-Māturīdī states that Arabs usually went home after
accomplishing *ihram* (consecration for use in the pilgrimage) and did
not enter their houses through the appropriate doors, but from the back.
But some say that Arabs customarily prefer to enter their houses through
the back doors because they do not want to be unsuccessful again after
doing their activities fruitlessly. Therefore, righteousness is by performing
devotion, submission, obedience to Allah and by entering houses through
the proper doors. Besides, this verse can be interpreted as *tamthīl*
(exemplification or likening) and *ramz* (allegory), not by its literal meaning.
This verse is similar to the verses:

وَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِندِ ٱللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ
مِّنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ كِتَٰبَ ٱللَّهِ وَرَآءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا
يَعْلَمُونَ

[*And when there came to them a messenger from Allah, confirming what was with
them, a party of the people of the Book threw away the Book of Allah behind
their backs. As if (it had been something) they did not know!;* QS. 2:101].

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ ٱللَّهُ مِيثَٰقَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُۥ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا
تَكْتُمُونَهُۥ فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَآءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَٱشْتَرَوْا۟ بِهِۦ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۖ فَبِئْسَ
مَا يَشْتَرُونَ

[*And remember Allah took a covenant from the people of the Book, to make it*

known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it; but they threw it away behind their backs, and purchased with it some miserable gain! and vile was the bargain they made! QS. 3:187].

The meaning of *nabadha* (to throw) in these verses can be understood without using its literal meaning because its actual meaning is that the people of the Book disregarded and paid no attention to the Book of Allah. Hence, real piety is not obtained by disobeying the teachings of Muḥammad, but by following his teachings.[76]

D. Concluding Remarks

In accordance with the elucidation above, we can conclude that there are seven obvious characteristics or features of *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah,* which was written by al-Māturīdī, who lived around the time of Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), a famous Muslim historian and exegete.

These characteristics are the following. **[1]** Al-Māturīdī brings together *naqlī*)traditional) and *'aqlī*)rational(sources. The *naqlī* sources consist of the Qur'an and the tradition conveyed by the prophet or his companions, whereas the *'aqlī* source stems from his thoughts. Thus, it is justifiable to say that al-Māturīdī's Qura'nic exegesis can be called *tafsīr bi al-izdiwāj* or the exegesis that amalgamates *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* (traditional exegesis) with *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (rational exegesis). **[2]** Al-Māturīdī is not an interpreter who uses excessive grammatical analysis to interpret the Qura'nic verses. His linguistic scrutiny is not disproportionate because it corresponds to the necessity required to utilize grammatical analysis without excessiveness. **[3]** Al-Māturīdī sometimes presents many styles of *qirā'ah* (recitation of the Qur'an) at a glance and without thorough explanation. He also does not assess the category of each *qirā'ah*. Besides, he rarely mentions the people who are considered as the sources of *qirā'ah*. **[4]** Al-Māturīdī can be categorized as a cautious exegete who seldom uses *Isrā'īliyyāt* (the Judeo-Christian traditions and tales) to interpret the Qura'nic verses. **[5]** Al-Māturīdī is not just a theologian, but also an exegete who prefers *tawassuṭ* (nonaligned and independent standpoint) in dealing with the many different viewpoints

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[76] *Ibid.*, pp. 388-9.

among theologians. **[6]** Al-Māturīdī tends to follow the Ḥanafite school of thought when he deals with the jurisprudential Qura'nic verses. This tendency appears most clearly when his legal views are compared with the views of Hanafite followers, such as Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ. **[7]** Al-Māturīdī has an independent and brave standpoint when he interprets the Qura'nic verses. That standpoint is that he applies *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the causes of revelation) loosely and slackly. Hence, he utilizes the context and factual circumstances in which each verse was revealed.

At last, those seven characteristics undoubtedly can demonstrate the competency and proficiency of al-Māturīdī in Qura'nic exegesis. Therefore, after discussing this reasonable fact, it is right to conclude that al-Māturīdī is not only a foremost theologian, but also a skillful and dexterous exegete. In line with this assessment, it will be wise for us to suggest to all writers on Qura'nic interpretation to acknowledge al-Māturīdī's expertise and to cite his considerable methodology in their works, especially when they explain the early Sunnite exegetes. Besides, it will be more useful, perhaps, if we can broaden our study on the reliability of traditions that are mentioned in *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*.

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