

THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF KALĀM OF ABŪ MANṢŪR AL-MĀTURIDI

Sahilun A Nasir

Lecturer at the Faculty of Dakwah of STAIN Jember

المخلص

يبدو أنّ الفكرة الكلامية عند الماتريدي لم تخط باهتمام عند المسلمين الإندونيسيين والغريب أيضا أنّ الكتب التي ألّفها الماتريدي أيضا نادرة ومن الصعب أن نجدها في هذا البلد المحبوب وإذا نظرنا إلى الفكرة الكلامية عند الأشعري فإن الأمر مختلف من انهما من أئمة أهل السنة و الجماعة على حدّ سواء. ولهذا يحاول هذا البحث بلورة طريقة الكلام عند الماتريدي فيما يتعلق بصفات الله وكلام الله و النظر إلى الله و الكبائر وأعمال الإنسان. والطريقة التي إستخدمها الكاتب طريقة الهرمينتيك للكشف وللتوضيح عن طريقة كلامه عن الموضوعات السابقة. وقد إنتج الباحث بأن أبا حنيفة والمعتزلة لهما تأثير قويّ في طريقة كلامه فيما يتعلق بتلك الموضوعات.

Abstrak

Wacana tentang teologi al-Maturidi nampak kurang mendapat perhatian dari orang-orang Islam Indonesia. Tidak kalah kerusiannya adalah bahwa karya-karyanya langka untuk ditemukan di negeri ini. Fakta ini begitu berbeda dengan teologi Asy'ari. Padahal kedua tokoh itu merupakan penganut Ahlus-sunnah wal jama'ah. Untuk keperluan itu, tulisan ini mengeksplorasi metode teologi al-Maturidi terkait dengan sifat-sifat Allah, firman Allah, melihat Allah, dosa besar, dan aktifitas manusia. Pendekatan epistemologi, yang didukung dengan metode hermeneutik, digunakan sebagai alat pembedah untuk memperjelas metode teologinya tentang subjek-subjek tersebut. Akhirnya, tulisan ini menyimpulkan

bahwa pengaruh Abu Hanifah dan Mu'tazilah telah memberikan kebebasan pada metode teologinya terkait dengan kelima subyek itu.

Keywords: *kalām*, al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, *ahl al-Sunna*.

A. Introduction

Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world with 80 per cent of its population is Muslims; most of them are the followers of *Ahl al-Sunna* school of thought or *Sunni* Muslims. The rest are either the followers of the *Syī'a*, or the *Tahrīriyya* (Liberalists). In the *Ahl al-Sunna* or *Sunni* school of thought, there are two leading figures. The foremost is Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī. He was born in Basra in 260 H/873 M. His theological works, for instance, are *Maqālat al-Islāmiyyīn*, *al-Lumā' fī Radd Abl al-Zaiḡ wa'l-Bida'* and *al-Ibāna 'an Uṣūl al-Diyāna*. In the field of *fiqh*, he was a follower of *Syafi'ite* school. The rapid development of al-Ash'arī theology was due to the support of the incumbent power, i.e. the administrator of *Nizām al-Mulk*. In its development, the well-known figures, such as al-Baqillānī, al-Juwainī, al-Ghazālī, al-Sanūsī, Fakhruddīn al-Rāzī and al-Shahrastānī, disseminated the theological thought of al-Ash'arī.

Another one is al-Māturīdī (238-333 H/852-944 M). He lived in Samarkand. In the field of *fiqh*, he was a follower of *Hanafite* school. His thoughts were actually rather general but his theological one has been prominent and goes without saying. His master piece book on theology was the *Book of Oneness (Kitāb al-Tawḥīd)*. Concerning his prominence in the *Sunni* theological school of thought, it is often stated that "when it was said *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a*, it means the followers of al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī."¹

Despite the prominence he has achieved in *Sunni* theological school of thought, *al-Māturīdī's* thoughts and ideas are less known by Indonesians and his works are not popular. It is difficult, for instance, to find his *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* among Indonesians. In addition, it is also because of the legal school of thought he followed that is different from that common in Indonesia.

¹ Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (Qatar: Dār al-Jamī'a al-Qatariyya, n.d.), p. viii.

However, it is important to encourage Indonesian-Sunni Muslims to do research on al-Māturīdī's view of *Kalām*. It is to meet the necessity of proper study on theology, consequently they should not only study al-Ash'ariyya, but also al-Māturīdīyya. This paper tries to realise the necessity of broadening a scientific discourse of theology in academic perspective. The discussion focuses on the thought of al-Māturīdī as part of Sunni theology.

B. Al-Māturīdī: His Life and Works

His complete name is Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Māturīdī al-Anṣārī. His title names are '*Alam al-Hudā*, *Imām al-Hudā*, and *Imām al-Mutakallimīn*. These title names reflect his high authority in Islamic sciences. It was said that he was very courageous to defend and keep *al-Sunna* and '*aqīda*. His learning age was at the third century of *Hijra* when the *Mu'tazila* ideology began to withdraw.

In the field of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), al-Māturīdī was the follower of *Hanafite* school. He was curious to know the *madhhab* because at that time the place where he lived became the arena of debate on different Islamic sciences, such as *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* and *kalām*, between schools of thought, both *fiqh* and theology. The debate clustered in the end into two groups: *Mu'tazila* in the one hand and *ahl al-kalām* in the other. To deal with the scientific problem in *Kalām* and to argue against *Mu'tazila*, al-Māturīdī seems to adopt the methods of *Hanafite* school.²

The circumstances encouraged al-Māturīdī to study religious science in great detail, especially *Kalām* science with which Muslims were concerned at the time. In his being concerned with Islamic studies, he could finally produce his so valuable and monumental works with which he got many degrees such as *theologian*, *jurist*, *Quran commentator*, a founder of doctrinal school of *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a* (Orthodox Sunni School in *Kalām*).³

² A. Hanafi, *Pengantar Teologi Islam* (Jakarta: Pustaka al Husna, 1980), p. 133.

³ E. Bosworth C.E., *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, n.d.), p. 846.

Concerning his works, al-Māturīdī was rather a generalist than a specialist thinker in the field of theology. The works he wrote show us his broad knowledge in almost any sciences. He is certainly different from other thinkers. However, the book of *al-Tawhīd* he wrote proves that theology is the most important theme he interested. Al-Māturīdī was able to explain his theological concept and doctrine. Even he was successful in writing some works that can be used as references for his followers and those who are interested in doing a study on them. From the titles of his books noted by the historians, al-Māturīdī has made his life defend the true *'aqīdah* and refuse the concept of the people who turn away from *sunna*. He has showed his broad science both in *Fiqh*, *Uṣūl*, *Kalām*, and *Tafsīr*.⁴

Through his works, al-Māturīdī tried to counter *Mu'tazila* and smash down the concept of *al-Khamsa*. To refuse the concept of *Mu'tazila*, he wrote a book entitled *Bayān Wahm al-Mu'tazila*, as well as to refuse *Uṣūl al-Khamsa* written by Muḥammad al-Bāhili. He also wrote a book entitled *al-Radd 'Alā al-Uṣūl al-Qaramīta* and *Radd Kitāb al-Imāma li Ba'd al-Rawāfi'd*. In the field of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, he wrote *Ma'khabh al-Sharā'i'* and *Kitāb al-Jadal*.

C. Al-Māturīdī's Methodology and Thought on *Kalām*

Al-Māturīdī is different from al-Ash'arī in many ways of thinking. There are at least to be about 30 issues of which they are different. *Taqdir* (human destiny/fate) is one of the most debated themes between theologians and *mutakallimun*. In contrast to al-Ash'arī which is close to Jabariyya, al-Māturīdī's view on human destiny is similar to that of Qadāriyya. In spite of these differences, they uninterruptedly share the same ideas on rejecting *Mu'tazila*'s way of thinking on this belief. They disagree with *Mu'tazila*'s views on destiny and defend the belief of Sunni instead.

In addition, al-Māturīdī's view on *ma'rifa* (the highest level of knowledge to know of Allah) is based on the human thought and reason. It can be understood either that *ma'rifa* can be obtained by the use of merely human reasoning and also that human reasoning is capable

⁴ al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, p. vi.

of obtaining *ma'rifa*. It is reasonable then that al-Māturīdī comes to the opinion that everything is has its own character of good and bad. On the contrary, al-Ash'arī views that *ma'rifa* is based on God's provision and guide. Consequently, good and bad are also decided by *Syāri'*. Compared to that of al-Ash'arī, it is understandable that al-Māturīdī's views on human thought and reasoning seem to fit with Mu'tazila's way of thinking. That does not to say that al-Māturīdī is a Mu'tazily, however. Despite of al-Māturīdī's acceptance of human thought and reasoning that makes him to some extent close to Mu'tazila's way of thinking, he is still different from Mu'tazila and in a great detail he is not a part of Mu'tazila. It is in this sense, actually that Syekh Muhammad Abū Zahrah shares his opinion and states that:

“...such is close to the opinion of Mu'tazila. However, Mu'tazila followers think that *ma'rifatullāh* is obliged in mind. The followers of al-Māturīdiyya do not decide such thought, but they think that the obligation of *ma'rifatullāh* may be found through the fact of mind. This obligation never brings into reality, except Allah, the Supreme substance.”⁵

Al-Māturīdī's theological thought is mainly reflected in his *Kitāb Al-Taḥdīd*. In accordance with this theological thinking, what follows is to discuss some example issues as *Sifātullāh*, *Kalāmullāh*, *Ru'yatullāh*, *Murtakib al-Kabīra*, and *Af'āl al-Tbād*.

1. *Sifātullāh (the Attributes of Allah)*

According to al-Māturīdī, Allah is immaterial though there are some verses of Qur'an describing as if Allah were material, such as:

- 1) “*The Hand of Allah is over their hands*” (al-Faḥ: 10);
- 2) “*But will abide (for ever) The Face of thy Lord, Full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour*” (ar-Rahmān: 27);
- 3) “*But construct an Ark under Our Eyes and our Inspiration, and address Me No (further) on behalf of those who are in sin: For they are about to be overwhelmed (in the flood)* (Hūd: 37).

The verses are the *naṣ* (authoritative quotation from the Qur'an) of *mutashābihāt* that must be understood through the figure of speech.

⁵ Abū Zahra, *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), p. 199.

The words such as *al-yad* (hand), *al-wajh* (face), and *al-'ain* (eye), related to Allah which mean the *power*, *mercy*, and *authority* of Allah upon His creatures. Allah does not have body that constitutes substance and accident. He is completely different from the creatures like men who depend on their parts of body. Without the parts of the body, Allah is still powerful, whereas human beings are not.

Abū Zahra states that according to al-Māturīdī, the reality of Allah can be understood with the proposition of universe existence and human logical argumentation. In this belief, the existence of universe is because of the ultimate cause, the Creator of the universe itself. This is the furthest cause that has existed before the others. In this sense, al-Māturīdī interprets that Allah is in 'Ary. It does not mean that Allah occupies a certain place as mentioned in the following verses:

- 1) “for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein” (Qāf:16)
- 2) “There is not a secret consultation between three, but He makes the fourth among them,” (al-Mujādila:7)

The verses cannot be understood literally or textually. They must be in the metaphorical meanings or *majāzī* (the figure of speech) because they belong to those of *mutashābihāt*. The words indicating the “places” in the above verses do not mean to glorify them, but they become glorious because Allah has selected them as the special places for the selected creatures. For this reason, Allah is not in the certain place. From this, the expression that Allah is together with him in His 'Ary, for example, indicates the meaning of 'ulūw (Gloriousness) and *jalāl* (the Greatness) which cannot be attributed to the creatures. The closeness of Allah means that His closeness is in the position as the Giver of protection (not from the place point of view) as well as the Giver of love, affection, direction, and guidance. These attributes are the characteristic of *Dhātī* indicating that Allah always compassionates His lovers and other creatures.

According to al-Māturīdī, the attribute of Allah is nothing, but *dhāt* of Allah. This opinion seems to be in line with that of al-Ash'arī who also determines the attribute of Allah though both of them have different point of views. The first states that the attribute of Allah does not stand with His *dhāt* and is also not separated from His *dhāt*. It does not have a shape or *kainūna* (essence) that is free from the *dhāt*.

So, it can be said that the regarded attribute can be understood as the regarded *qadīm* or *ta'addud al-qudamā'*. On the contrary, the latter states that the attribute is a part from the *dhāt* because Allah has the attributes of *qudra* (powerful), *irādah* (wishful), *'ilm*, *ḥāya*, *sam'*, *baṣar*, and *kalām*.

The opinions of the two scholars determine that Allah has the attribute though they are in a little different nuance of explaining the attributes. From this point of view, they reject the opinion of Mu'tazila that denies the attribute of Allah and states that the attribute adheres to the *dhāt* (essence). In addition, they think that the opinion of Mu'tazila can lead to the concept of *ta'addud al-qudamā'*. For this, al-Māturīdī explains the attribute differently from al-Ash'arī and Mu'tazila.

However, the nuance is closer to Mu'tazila. Even it can be synchronized. For this, there are really no differences among Muslims about the concept that Allah is *'ālim*, *qādīr*, *sāmī'*, *bāṣir*, and *murīd*. The difference is only on the question of whether the attributes of Allah are something out of the *dhāt* and have the shape apart from the *dhāt* or not. It is clear that according to al-Māturīdī the attribute is nothing different from the *dhāt*. So, it is close to the opinion of Mu'tazila that the attribute exists, only the *asmā'* (names) of *amr i'tibārī*.⁶

As a result, the attribute is the name that can indicate a part of the *dhāt's* condition such as long, short, intellectual, and others. The question is now whether the attribute is the only name with *majāzī* (metaphorical meaning) or it has the real meaning. This is really the beginning of the different standpoint of the attribute of Allah.

A group of Asha'riyya, as stated by al-Bāqillāni, defines the attribute as something on the characterised (*al-mauṣūf*). For this reason, it has the real meaning. On the contrary, Mu'tazila defines it as the pure characterisation of the characteriser (*wāṣif*). In this term, al-Māturīdī rejects Mu'tazila that if the attribute is the characteristic of the characteriser, it withdraws the opinion that the creature is *a'yān* (essences) and attribute. According to al-Māturīdī, the attribute is not the characterisation. In this sense, he rejects the comment of al-Ka'bī, a figure of Mu'tazila. He states that the attribute of Allah defined as the pure designation (*qaul*) is not true because *qaul* is new (*hadīth*). Allah is not attributed with the new.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

2. *Kalāmullāh (the Words of Allah)*

Still in relation with the attributes of Allah, al-Māturīdī explains that *Kalāmullāh* has meanings on the *dhāt* of Allah and does not constitute the alphabets or sentences and also the sounds. The sounds of *Kalāmullāh* themselves cannot be heard. For this, they are *qadīm* (the Earliest) and not created. They are eternal; they are one and cannot be divided. They are not Arabic or Syrian, but pronounced by the people in different expression. In discussing *Kalāmullāh*, Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, the prominent scholar supporting al-Māturīdī madzab, states in his *Tahṣīnat al-Adilla* that:

“The people think differently about the *Kalāmullāh* questions of whether they are *qadīm* (the earliest) or *ḥadīth* (the newest). The truth expert says that *Kalāmullāh* are really *Azqālī* in which they do not have any kinds, alphabets, and sounds. They are the attributes on the *dhāt* of Allah. Allah says with the attribute....”⁷

From the above point, it is clear that *Kalāmullāh* are not the same as human beings’ sayings which constitute the alphabets and sounds. *Kalāmullāh* that were mentioned in the *azqālī* time are not attributed with the alphabets, spellings, and sounds as well as the attributes of the creatures in everything. What is meant by al-Māturīdī that the Koran is the existing *Kalām* that stand on the *dhāt* of the *mutakallim* (the speaker) and expressed with the words is the expression of *Kalām*. They constitute the meanings adhered to the *dhāt*.

Concerning the *qidām* of the Qur’an, al-Māturīdī argues on the verse of the Arabians challenged to compete with the Qur’an of Allah’s *kalām* and *ḥujja*. As the *ḥujja* that the Qur’an is *Kalāmullāh*, there are two points of view to be noted. *First*, it is the proof that the Arabians are unable to make the verses like the Qur’an or to compete with it. *Second*, all recited from the Qur’an are not expressed through the verses but the mind that can show the limited understanding of the *ḥikma* mentioned in the Qur’an. These become an argument that *kalām* belongs to the *dhāt* of *ʿAlīm* and no secrecy for Him. From this point of view, the Qur’an is the Words of Allah that are not new. It is *Kalāmullāh* with the meaning that it is the essence of His *kalām*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

3. Ru'yatullāh (Seeing Allah)

There are no differences on *ru'yatullāh* between al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī.⁸ This question differs from that of *Kalāmullāh* as stated clearly in the following quotation.

“The difference between al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī is only on what heard by the Prophet Musa as His existing *kalām*. al-Māturīdī denies what heard by the Prophet Musa as *Kalāmullāh* that has existed the earliest and been on His *dhāt*. On the contrary, al-Ash'arī thinks that what heard by the Prophet Musa is *Kalāmullāh* that has existed the earliest.”⁹

Both al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī have the same view on *ru'yatullāh* when they reject the opinion of Mu'tazila denying *ru'yatullāh*. According to them, the term *ru'ya* means seeing Allah in the judgement day as mentioned in the Qur'an: “Some faces, that Day, will beam (in brightness and beauty); looking towards their Lord.” (al-Qiyāma: 23).

Different from al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī, Mu'tazila bases the discussion of *ru'yatullāh* on the logical thinking that *ru'yatullāh* needs a certain place for both the seer and the seen. In this sense, Allah certainly has a place. Allah is, however, in fact the Holy from place and time changing.

In addition, according to al-Māturīdī, *ru'yatullāh* in the judgement day is a part (*aḥwāl*) of the judgement day, event that only Allah who knows what and how it will be. Human beings can only know the expressions determining the event without explanation and unquestionable. Different from that, Mu'tazila thinks that seeing Allah can be analogised with seeing thing (*jism*). So, in this point of view, Mu'tazila analogises the immaterial (God) with the material. This can be done with the note that the immaterial consists of the material or the unseen thing from the seen one. From this point of view, al-Māturīdī determines *ru'ya* as the part of the judgement day event that only Allah who knows what and how it will be.

⁸ Sahilun A. Nasir, *Imam Al Asy'ari tentang Rukyatullah di Akhirat* (Jakarta: Rajagrafindo Persada, 2005). 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Zayd al-Rūmī, *Dalālat al-Qur'ān wa'l-Athar 'alā Ru'yatillāh Ta'ālā bi'l-Bashar* (Riyad: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 1405/1985).

⁹ Jalāl Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥamid Mūsā, *Nash'at al-Ash'ariyya wa-Taṭanwuruhā* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub, n.d.), p. 302.

It is clear enough that, according to al-Māturīdī, Allah can be seen in the hereafter because He exists although He does not have the shape, take the place, and is infinite. If He is finite, al-Māturīdī adds, He will be material (*jism*) as the *jism* is the name of every finite thing. Allah is in fact a *shai'* (the one) that means *ithbāt lā ghair* (the one that surely exist, not the others). The existence of universe is for example, the evidence of *ithbāt* that Allah exists. For this, Allah is called *syai'*.¹⁰

Al-Māturīdī's rejection to Mu'tazila's opinion of *ru'ya* is reflected in his rejecting the opinions of al-Ka'bī, whose argument is based on the following verse of the Qur'an, that: "No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, Yet is acquainted with all things", (al-An'am: 103).

In this verse, al-Ka'bī defines the word *idrāk* as *ru'ya*, which means that Allah is the Holy from being seen. Al-Māturīdī rejects this opinion with defining the term as "having control over the finites". According to al-Māturīdī, Allah is really the Holy from this attribute of finite because He is Infinite. Allah creates all things. Again, he explains that *ru'ya* does not cover the finite. It even happens to the things which essence cannot be recognised except with the understanding of it. The word *idrāk* only means seeing the limit of thing. With this limit the thing can be seen. For example, the brightness of the day can be seen but the essence of it cannot. For this, *ru'ya* does not refer to seeing the finite thing. In addition, al-Māturīdī supports his opinion of *ru'ya* with argumentation on the saying of Muhammad as quoted popularly by al-Maghribī: "You will see your God in the judgement day as you see the full moon".

Seeing is in this case the limit and width of seeing. The essence of it cannot be seen although what can be seen externally can be dominated. It can be seen convincingly. According to al-Māturīdī, *ru'ya* without *idrāk* is based on the Prophet Musa's request for being able to do *ru'ya* or to see Allah as in His Commandment (al-A'raf:143). If *ru'ya* were not permitted, certainly the Prophet Musa would never understand his God. In fact, for the one who does not know his God, his composition cannot be trusted.

¹⁰ al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tanḥīd*, p. 79.

Another argument presented by al-Māturīdī is that *ru'ya* constitutes an additional gift and reward from Allah (Yūnus: 26). Allah promises the better goodness from Muslims do in the world. Finally, al-Māturīdī states firmly that *ru'ya* is not only through the knowledge of conscience, but also the real *ru'ya* that real knowledge cannot be realised except with *mushābada*.

4. Al-Murtakib al-Kabīra (Behaviour of Great Sin)

According to al-Māturīdī, faith will not disappear because of doing a great sin. The faith and performance do not influence or eliminate each other since the faith is in *qalb* (heart) and the performance in the movement of the parts of body.

The explanation of faith and performance lead to an understanding that *ma'rifa* consists of faith that is thicker than *taṣḍīq* (to justify). *Ma'rifa* is to find the meaning of the faith whereas *taṣḍīq* is only the information on the truth of faith. From this point of view, the strong and weak faith depends on the strong and weak intelligence in finding the faith itself. For this, the act or performance does not influence the thickness or thinness of faith. However, viewed causally or rationally, the strength of faith gives encouragement and dynamics to the growth of high and glorious morals. This concept leads to the understanding that the sin of Muslims cannot influence their faiths. According to al-Māturīdī, *murtakib al-kabīra* (behaviour of great sin) of Muslims is not eternal in the hell, although they die before they repent to Allah. al-Māturīdī's explanation is based on the Qur'an (al-An'ām:160).

According to al-Māturīdī, the bad acts (*ṣayyi'a*) will be replied proportionally as many as the acts. The eternity in the hell is for only the people who believe in more than one God and those who do not believe in Allah or become atheist. The sinful men who believe in Allah are not the same as those who do not believe in Allah. The latter will be under the former. If they are in the same punishment, it will be in contrast with the promise of Allah himself. Allah is the Holy from breaking his promise.

... the faith will not disappear because the great sin. The sinful man who believes in Allah is still a *Mu'min* (believer). Allah will decide his

great sin and He will punish him proportionally as many as his acts in the hereafter. Allah may apologise or punish him as many as his sins.

The true one in the case of *Mu'minūn* who perform the great sin is submit their matters to Allah. If Allah wishes, He will apologise them as His excellence, goodness, and mercy. If He wishes, He will punish as many as their sin quality. For this, they are not eternal in the hell. The people who have the faith are between expectation (*rajā'*) and fear (*khawf*). It is therefore possible for Allah to punish the people with the small sin and apologise those with the great sin as His commandment that actually Allah does not apologise the people who ally Allah with others, and He will apologise a part from that for those Allah wishes. Those who ally Allah with others have performed the great sin.¹¹

The reward and punishment Allah promises may not, according to al-Māturīdī, take place certainly in the hereafter.¹² It is clear that if Allah promises, He will do it and never break it. He is obliged to give reward to those who perform goodness and punish those who perform badness. It is impossible, according to this concept, that if Allah does not keep His promise and He avoid His wisdom and justice.

5. Af'āl al-'Ibād (Human Being)

Al-Māturīdī rejects Mu'tazila's view that Allah is obliged to do well or even the best for mankind. According to him, this obligation of Allah does not decrease His absoluteness. The absolute Power and the Will of Allah are certainly defined with the following terms that:

- 1) Human beings have free will and action.
- 2) Allah's sentencing is not on the basis of arbitrariness and His absolute Power and Will, but on human beings' freedom to use his capacity created by Allah.

From this point of view, it can be understood that, according to al-Māturīdī, Allah's Power and Will are not arbitrary. Good deeds are from Allah. Bad deeds are not from Him, but from human beings themselves. The logical consequence of this view is that Allah's Justice means implementing the norms of Allah. The rewards are for those who perform righteousness and the punishment are for those who perform badness are Allah's justice.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹² Harun Nasution, *Teologi Islam* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1972), p. 134.

This question has to do with whether human beings have freedom to create and determine their own free will or are they subject to Allah's predestination. In this context, it must be asserted that to realise a deed there must be will and capacity to perform the will. In addition, it should also be criticised whom the will belongs to? Does it belong to human or belong to Allah? In this case, al-Māturīdī argues that there are two deeds, Allah's deed and human being's one. The deeds to take the shape of human being's capacity and the use of capacity are human being's deeds. The human being's deed is that in real meaning, not in figurative one.

The reward and punishment are based on the use of capacity created by Allah. For this, human beings will get reward based on the right use of capacity and punishment is based on the wrong use of capacity.

The explanation of reward and punishment presented by al-Māturīdī above gives an understanding that human being's wish or desire determines the use of capacity, both for reward and punishment. In this case, human beings are free to choose because Allah gives them capacity to choose. For this, their right or wrong choice depends on their capacity to choose and Allah will reward or punish them based on what they have done.

Concerning the question above, al-Māturīdī follows Abū Ḥanīfa's opinion of *mashī'a* (wish) and *riḍā* (willingness). According to him, Allah's wish or desire is His willingness. Human being's deeds are on His wish or desire, but not on His willingness. On the one hand, they do right on His wish and willingness. On the other hand, they do evil on His wish, not on His willingness.¹³

According to al-Māturīdī, human beings' free will is the freedom to choose what Allah likes and dislikes.

D. Some Remarks on al- Māturīdī's Thought

Jalāl Muḥammad Mūsā states that "the two *imāms* of Sunny, al-Ash'arī and al-Māturīdī, are the Imams of *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jamā'a*."¹⁴

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

Although, the Sunny theologians are in fact not only two, but there are three. The third one is al-Ṭahāwī from Egypt.¹⁵

Al-Ash‘arī gives more influences than al-Māturīdī. His works are more popular than al-Māturīdī’s ones. This is because of his closer living to the centre of Islamic government than al-Māturīdī. For this, al-Ash‘arī was easier to have opportunity to teach and got the supporting ideas from the public and Muslims’ opinions.

In fact, al-Māturīdī was earlier at good service of enforcing the concepts of *Ahl al-Sunna* orienting to correct the concept of *Mu‘tazila* which also developed in the area of al-Māturīdī and was considered to do deviation in Islamic *‘aqīda*. In this point of view, it is thought that many *Mu‘tazila* doctrines are not in line with the Qur’an and the Sunna because of its liberal thinking based on the philosophy and logics. Besides, at the time *Mu‘tazila* did not get support from the incumbent power, al-Mutawakkil (237-247) from Abbasid who had great contribution to support *Ahl al-Sunna*.

Most Indonesian Muslims are the followers of *Ahl al-Sunna* which their theological doctrines develop and refer to the concepts composed by al-Ash‘arī and his followers. This reality can be seen from the books on *‘Aqīda* taught and the characteristic influenced by the doctrines. For example, the popular “fifty religious doctrines” in Indonesian Muslims are mainly found in the Islamic *pesantrens*. It is seen that the work of ethics is less found in Indonesian Muslims, mainly in reaching the world welfare as if they do not have authority to determine their own deeds and fate. On the other hand, the theological doctrines of al-Māturīdī, of both taken from his works and developed by his followers, are almost ignored although the name of al-Māturīdī has been known since he learned the theological doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunna wa’l-Jamā’a* school of thought.

The different opinion between al-Māturīdī and al-Ash‘arī is about 30 – 40 of *kalām* questions such as the understanding of the term *qada* and *qadar*. Al-Māturīdī thinks that *qadar* is the certainty of Allah in *azālī* time for everything (the creatures) that will find the fate with the certainty. *Qada* means the wish of Allah in *azālī* time that the creatures

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 281

must be in specific order. However, these differences do not make them consider one another infidel because these differences are of the semantic question rather than that of the essence problem.

Al-Māturīdī is considered as the founder of Sunni *Kalām* Science that supports the *‘aqīda* of *Ahl al-Sunna* with logics. Although he lived at the same time as al-Ash‘arī, both of them never communicated and knew each of their opinions. In case of the purpose and the way to reach the purpose, they are much the same. However, in term of *manhaj* (methodology), al-Matururidi is different from al-Ash‘arī. Their background of *fiqh* influences them. Al-Māturīdī follows the *fiqh* of Abū Ḥanīfa who is known as *ahl al-ra’y* (rationalist), whereas al-Ash‘arī follows al-Shāfi‘ī who is moderate but more traditional and bound to *naṣṣ*.

According to Harun Nasution¹⁶, al-Māturīdī has the same concept as Mu‘tazila who says that the mind can recognise the human beings’ obligation to thank to Allah. As stated by his follower, al-Bazdawī, “the belief in God and thankfulness to Him before divine revelation is compulsory in the concept of Mu‘tazila. In this case, al-Māturīdī has the same concept as Mu‘tazila’s, and so do the Samarkand and Iraqi *ulamās*.”

E. Conclusion

Based on the above explanations, there are some important points that are interesting to think in dealing with the discussion of al-Māturīdī’s concepts and thoughts. At the first part, the position of al-Māturīdī is important to remark. Al-Māturīdī was really concerned with the effort of correcting Islamic *‘aqīda* (belief) based on the Qur’an and the Sunna at the time that Mu‘tazila committed to enforce *al-miḥna*.

Of the most remarkable achievement of al-Māturīdī is the fact that al-Māturīdī was successful in synthesising *aql* and *naql* with free way of thinking. As it has been critically analyzed, al-Māturīdī had succeed in resolving the conflict of theological concept and discusses such difficult questions as *ṣifāt Allāh*, *‘arsh*, *istimā’*, *shafā’a*, *ru’ya*, *murtakib al-kibāra*, etc. This has been done based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78-79.

and by taking advances philosophical arguments and logics. Given the fact that he was close to Hanafiyah school of thought, this way of thinking could not be separated from his teachers who followed the prominent figure of *abl al-ra'yi*, Abu Hanifah.

Al-Māturīdī and al-Ash'arī were firstly in the same influence of Mu'tazila. However, they were different in logics and philosophy they used. In facing Mu'tazila, they had different way of answering. al-Māturīdī was closer to Mu'tazila but Al-al-Ash'arī in contrast to Mu'tazila. But, al-Māturīdī is considered as the first founder of *Kalām Sunni* because al-Ash'arī firstly followed the concept of Mu'tazila. After the age of 40 (300H), al-Ash'arī left Mu'tazila and he involved in Sunni later. On the contrary, al-Māturīdī who was 12 years older passed away earlier and never followed Mu'tazila.

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