Abstract: This paper aims to discuss the understanding of Islamic theology in Tafsir Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia. This paper mainly discussed the pattern of interpretation of the verses found in the Tafsir Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia, especially in interpreting the verses of kalam used as arguments by the Mutakalimin. The primary sources were Tafsir Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia. In contrast, the secondary sources were works from rational and traditional mainstreams. This study find that several verses of the Quran were used as Naqli arguments by rational and traditional mainstreams, which the Ministry of Religious Affairs then interpreted. This paper shows that the interpretation of the verses in the Tafsir tends to be somewhat closer to the rational-Mātūridiyah Samarkand style of thought, not the Muʿtazila’s rationale. On the other hand, it has very little in common with traditional mainstream, such as Ashʿarīyah and Mātūridiyah Bukhārī.

Keywords: Theology; Tafsir; Muʿtazila; Ashʿarīyah; Mātūridiyah.

Kata Kunci: Teologi; Tafsir; Muʿtazilah; Ashʿarīyah; Mātūrīdīyah.

Introduction

There are some theories about the arrival of Islam to the Archipelago/Indonesia. Firstly, Islam arrived in the Archipelago in the first century of Hijrah through Arab traders. Secondly, Islam came in the 13th century A.D. through Gujarat traders. Thirdly, Islam came to the Archipelago in the 13th century directly from the Middle East (Hadramaut) through wandering Sufis.

In the opinion of Pijnappel, Snouk Hurgronje, Moquette, and other Dutch scholars, it is argued that Islam came to the Archipelago from Gujarat and was brought by middle eastern traders from the Middle East who belonged to the Shafiʿi school of the late 12th century A.D. It is based on the similarities between the Gujarati schools of thought, the schools in the Archipelago, the Shafiʿi schools, and the similarity of tombstones found in Barus and Pasai.¹

Marison and T.W. Arnold refuted this theory. In Gujarat’s 13th century A.D. (1297), they still adhered to the Hindu-Buddhist religion. If Islam came from Gujarat, Islam was strong in Gujarat. Therefore, they thought Islam Nusantara originated from Malabar brought by traders with the 13th-century Syafiʿi school. Malabar is the only origin of Islam Nusantara. Moreover, directly from Arabia in the 7th century A.D., Islam was brought by Arab traders. Islam originated from Arabia and Hadramaut in the 7th century A.D. This opinion was supported by Crawford, Keijzer, Neiman, Hollander, Hamka, and Naquib al-Attas. For Azyumardi: 1) Islam came to the Archipelago directly from Arabia; 2) Islam was brought by professional teachers and broadcasters; 3) the first to convert to Islam were the kings and business people; 4) most of these professional publishers came with more real-massive in the 12th and 13th A.D. centuries.²

A.H. Johns said Islamic broadcasting was carried out by wandering Sufis of the 13th century A.D. The success of these Sufis was supported by the ability to present Islam in attractive, harmonious packaging, emphasizing more on conformity to Islam or continuity rather than changes in local religious beliefs and practices. Islam did not come by war and intense power, and this is a factor that makes syncretism easy; this is the pattern of...
Islam Nusantara.inds

**Indonesian Islamic Theology**

The style of Islamic theology that came to Indonesia was the Ashʿarīyah theology with the character of Sufism (Tarikat). Madrasas/Islamic boarding schools as centers of Islamic studies focus more on the subjects of Tafsir, Ḥadīth, Law (Uṣūl Fiqh and Fiqh), and Kalam. In many Madrasas that belong to Ahl al-Ḥadīth, theology/kalam lessons are not taught because they are suspected of understanding kalam/rational theology (Mutazilite), which is not considered Ahl al-Sunnah.

Ashʿarīyah theology was growing and becoming established in Indonesia when some scholars who studied in the Middle East, especially in Mecca and Medina, returned to Indonesia in the 17th and 18th centuries. These people, who were socially and intellectually included in the network of scholars in the Middle East, studied and followed the flow of Ashʿarīyah theology, which they then distributed through the books they wrote. The great scholars of this century, such as Hamzah Fansuri, Ar-Raniri, Abdul Rauf al-Singkili, Al-Maqassārī, Muhammad Nafis Al-Banjari, and Al-Palimbangi were followers of the Ashʿarīyah doctrine of kalam.4

Karel A. Steenbrink, in his research on the books used in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia in the 19th century, concluded that most of the books used by Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia were sharḥ from the books of the era of the development of Islamic thought, and specifically in theology/kalam issues. Books abstracted from the rational-muʿtazilah kalam scholars were found. The books of theology circulated in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries were derived from the books of the Ashʿarīyah theological circles. They included, among others, Bahjat al-ʿUlūm by Al-Samarqandi, Umm al-Barāḥīn (al-Durrāh or al-ʿAqāʿid al-Sughrā) by al-Sanūsī al-Husaynī, al-Mufīd by Sulaymān al-Jazūlī, Fath al-Mubīn by Muhammad al-Bājūrī, Kifāyat al-ʿAwām, and al-Miftāh fī Sharḥ Maʿrifat al-Islām by Muḥammad b. al-Shāfiʿī, Jawharat al-Tawḥīd, and Iftāḥ al-Murīd by Ibrāhīm al-Laqqānī, and Tafsīr al-Jalālayn.5 The authors and contents of these books are based on traditional Ashʿarīyah kalam. Like Bahjat al-ʿUlum of al-Samarqani, they contain the six pillars of Faith, the concept of Faith, and the attributes of God.

Since the 1970s, many alumni of Indonesian students who have completed their studies abroad, especially from Egypt/al-Azhar and the West, introduced rational and contextual theological views in various forms. Harun Nasution introduced his rational Islam and Nurcholis Madjid inclusive and substantive Islam.
In the opinion of Harun Nasution, traditional theology had several characteristics: 1) a low level of reason; 2) the lack of freedom of humans in their will and actions; 3) freedom of thought bound by many dogmas; 4) disbelief in sunnatullāh and causality; 5) bound to the textual meaning of the Quran and hadith; 6) static in attitude and thought. This flow of kalam is represented by Ashʿariyah and Mātūridiyah. Rational theology or sunnatullāh theology has the following characteristics: 1) a high position of reason; 2) human freedom in their will and actions; 3) the basic teachings only bind the freedom to think in the Quran and hadith, which are very few; 4) believing in sunnatullāh and causality; 5) taking the metaphorical meaning of the revelation text; 6) dynamic in thinking. The Muʿtazilah and Mātūridiyah of Samarkand represent this flow of kalam.

The styles of modern Islamic theology in Indonesia can be grouped into 1) neo-modernism, with the emphasis on Islam that must be involved in the struggle for modernism among its characters, Nurcholis Madjid; 2) Socialism-Democracy, with the emphasis on Islamic missions that must give meaning to humans among its characters M. Dawam Rahardjo and Adi Sasono; 3) Universalism (Internationalism) with the emphasis on the universal nature of Islam that gives a permanent dictum among its characters M. Amin Rais and AM Saifuddin; 4) Modernism with the emphasis on rational aspects and the renewal of Islamic thought following current conditions among its characters Harun Nasution and Djohan Effendi.

Abdurrahman Muslim grouped the theological patterns in Indonesia into 1) rational theology, which tends to modernize Islam; 2) hermeneutic theology, which tends to Islamization 3) transformative theology, which emphasizes the issue of justice and social inequality.

From the explanation above, the problem will be studied in this paper is the theological understanding of the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The focus of the problem was on how the pattern of interpretation of the verses of kalam is found in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, especially those related to 1) reason and revelation; 2) Human Actions and God’s Will; 3) Justice and God’s Deeds. After being analyzed descriptively-comparatively, conclusions about the tendency of theological understanding were drawn.

The method of this research was library research by collecting primary and secondary data. The primary data source was the Book of Tafsir by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, published in 1996. Secondary data were direct works from the flow of rational kalam, such as Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsah, Mutashābih al-Qurʾān by Qāḍī ʿAbd
al-Jabbār (Muʿtazilah figure); al-ʻTawḥīd by Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (a Māturīdīyah Samarkand figure). Direct works of traditional kalam schools include al-Ibān ‘an Uṣūl al-Diyānah, al-Luma‘ fi al-Radd ʻalā Abl al-Ziyagh wa-al-Bida’, Maqālāt al-Islāmiyīn wa-Ikhlāf al-Muṣallīn, by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (Ashʿarīyah figure); Uṣūl al-Dīn by Abū al-Yusr al-Badawī (a Māturīdīyah figure). Furthermore, al-Milal wa-al-Nihal by al-Shahrastānī, al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyah by Abū al-Zahrah, and Islamic theology by Harun Nasution were used to complement these secondary sources.

From studying the sources above, several verses of the Quran used as naqli arguments by rational and traditional kalam schools were found and collected, and then their interpretations according to the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs were explained. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of the interpretation of the verses of kalam was carried out with the rational and traditional schools of kalam to conclude the theological tendencies contained in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

A Writing History of the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs

The writing of this interpretation is under the Foundation for Translators and Interpreters of the Qurān of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia with its Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 90 of 1972 and the Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 8 of 1973 chaired by Prof. Bustami A. Chief Gani. Then, the Stipulation of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 30 of 1980: Prof. KH. Ibrahim Husein LML (chairman) and members such as K.H. Syukri Ghazali, Prof. H. Bustami A. Gani. Prof. Dr. KH. Muctar Yahya, Prof. KH. M. Salim Fachry, KH. Muchtar Lutfi El-Ansari, Dr. JS. Badudu, KH.M. Amin Nasir, HA. Azis Darma Wijaya, and K.H. Nur Asjik, MA.

From the names of the team members above, Prof. Bustami A. Gani, Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Yahya, and KH. Nur Asjik, MA is a direct student of the author of the interpretation al-Marāghī, Ahmad Mustafa al-Marāghī. Maybe this is one of the considerations in this interpretation based on the book of al-Marāghī interpretation.

Howard M. Federspiel, in his analysis of the targets to be achieved in writing this Standard Interpretation, argued the following:

1. The writing of this Tafsir is part of the central government’s five-year development plan. The state was involved in disseminating the values of Islamic teachings to the community.
2. Involving Muslim scholars from various IAIN showed maturity and
ability as interpreters.
3. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia planned to create standards for writing interpretations and translations in the Archipelago.
4. The ideology of a group of Indonesians from outside the government called the National Muslims could be explained. This interpretation consists of 11 volumes; each consists of 3 chapters and 1 volume of the Muqadimah of the Quran and its Tafsir. The systematics used in this interpretation is to put forward a preamble of letters to be interpreted, which contains the naming of the letters, the number of verses, the place where the letters descend, the main contents, and the meaning of the letters with the previous letter. Then, the subject/topic of the problem (discussion) to be discussed is explained by citing one or several verses to be interpreted including their translation. Furthermore, the interpretation is compiled by mentioning munāsabah (the relationship between one verse and its previous verse). If there is a history or ḥadīth that explains the reasons for the revelation of the verse/letter, the ḥadīth is quoted. In this interpretation, there is no vocabulary or global meaning but it is immediately interpreted verse by verse in a language style that is easy to understand. If there is a difference in opinion among commentators on issues, they are discussed in verses. In that case, the opinion of the Jumhūr ‘Ulamāʾ is taken and included in the footnotes of the opinions of other scholars. After the interpretation is deemed sufficient, the discussion is then made using pointers to facilitate the understanding and comprehension of readers.

To make readers easier to find subject matters in the table of contents for each volume, the main topics are discussed. Moreover, in the last volume, a bibliography is listed to add insight for readers who want to know more about the problem of interpretation. Therefore, the systematics or technique (broadness of discussion) of this interpretation includes the writing technique of al-Manhaj al-Wasīṭ (medium, not too broad or itnābī, and not too short ijāzī) with a focus (emphasis on the explanation) on the meaning and purpose of the verses being interpreted. Moreover, this book of interpretation includes the first al-Jamāʿī interpretation in the Islamic world.

**Classification of the Kalam Verses**

*The Reason and Revelation*

The Muʿtazilites argued that all knowledge about the existence of God, knowing the good and bad, and obligations could be found out by reason.
and deep thought. In other words, all knowledge and obligations before revelation could be found out by reason. For Mātūrīdīyah Samarkand, the obligation to do the good and leave the bad could be found out by reason. The verses used as arguments are as follows: Hūd: 24, Fuṣṣilat: 53, al-Ghāshiyah: 17, and al-Aʿrāf: 185. For example:

نَّهُو وَ لَم يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ نَهُو ٱلحَقُّ أَنفُسِهِم حَتَّٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُم أَنَّهُ ظَهِرٌ أَوَّلَ يَسَعُوكَ بِرِيَٰبٍ أَنَّهُ

We will show them Our signs (of power) in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this 'Qurʾān' is the truth. (Q.S. Fuṣṣilat: 53)

أَفَلَا يَنظُرُونَ إِلَّا إِلَى إِبِلٍ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ

Do they not ever reflect on camels how they were ‘masterfully’ created (QS. Al-Ghāsyiyah: 17)

The last three verses of the verses above indicate that Allah has required deep reflection and thought on His creation until it becomes clear that He is the Creator. This means that these verses are proof of the obligation to thank Allah before the revelation. Humans with the ability of reason can find that kufr is haram because kufr is something Allah hates. Therefore, with the ability of reason, humans wherever they are must know that it is mandatory to thank Allah.

Ashʿariyah argued that knowing God could be obtained by reason, the good and the bad, the obligation to thank God, and the obligation to do the good and leave the bad could only be found out by revelation. Meanwhile, Mātūrīdīyah argued that all knowledge could be found out by reason, and obligations were found out by revelation. The verses of the Quran used as evidence are as follows: al-Isrāʾ: 15, Ṭāhā: 134, al-Nisāʾ: 165, and al-Mulk: 8-9, for example:

وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّٰئِذَا نَبِعَتِ الرُّسُل

And We never tormented (punished) until We sent a Messenger (QS. Al-Israʾ:15)

رُسُلُ مُبِينِينَ وَمَدَّمِرِينَ لِتَلْفَأَ يَسَعُوكَ لَدَآؤَ وَلَدَآؤُمُ اللَّهِ حَكِيماً حَكِيماً

All were messengers delivering good news and warnings so humanity should have no excuse before Allah after the coming of the messengers. And Allah is Almighty, All-Wise (QS. Al-Nisāʾ: 165)
The verses above explain that Allah will not give rewards or punishments for human actions’ good and bad except after the Prophets and Apostles have delivered them. Therefore, any matters related to religion can only be found out by humans through the intermediary of Allah’s Apostle, not only by reason. New obligations exist after being notified by Allah through His revelation. Faith and disbelief cannot be found out except by an Apostle sent by Allah.

It is found in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs that reason is one of the four guidance given by Allah to humans (instinct, five senses, reason, and religion). Intellect can: 1) channel instincts in a good direction until they can become the basis (principal) for goodness; 2) correct (improve) mistakes obtained from the five senses; 3) distinguish the good from the bad; 4) prepare the preamble to arrive at the natījah/conclusion; 5) know causality; 6) use the mahsat as a ladder to get to the maʿqūlāt; 7) use the senses to arrive at the abstract, meaningful, and unseen; 8) take arguments from the existence of creatures to conclude that there is a creator (God) who created and bestowed upon His creation everything needed to maintain and sustain life.

With the ability of reason, humans can also try to think about how to thank God, even the belief in the Oneness of God (tawḥīd). This belief in monotheism follows human instincts. By observing this real world, humans with their minds can also conclude that there is an eternal and eternal afterlife as the fairest possible place of retribution for all human actions, not only something that can be determined through religion but also proven by reason.

While al-Ghāshiyah: 17 is essentially a question from Allah to the polytheists who deny the resurrection day, Allah asks them if they ignore the empirical reality around them – camels who are familiar with their daily lives, if they reflect (using the five senses and contemplation). In that case, they will admit that there is a creator (God) who can resurrect humans in the Hereafter.

Al-Nisāʾ: 165 informs that there is no community Messengers have not been sent to them to deliver revelation (shariʿah), either narrated in the Quran or not, such as those sent to Japan, China, India, Europe, and America. This is done so that later in the Hereafter, there will be no excuse (hujjah) for the disbelievers to blame Allah for not coming to warn them; because of that, they became disbelievers. In al-Isrāʾ: 15, it is further emphasized that the commands and prohibitions are based on the Sharia and the Prophet’s guidance. Whoever deviates from them, means they have
misled (wasted) themselves. Therefore, there is no taklīf (legal imposition) except after the revelation (sharī ’ah).26

From several excerpts of the verses above, it can be concluded that the above interpretation does not have an explicit indication (guidance) that humans should know God, do good, and leave the bad by reason, except to invite unique humans who are disbelievers. In addition, humans should use sight, hearing, and reason to reflect and think about the verses of kawnīyah (nature) and qur’ānīyah to believe in the existence of God and Muhammad’s apostleship with the truth of the teachings he brought. There are orders, prohibitions, rewards, and punishments (obligations) after the messengers of the Sharī’ah were sent.

In terms of the ability of reason, it is concluded that there are similarities to the flow of Kalam Mātūrīdīyah Bukhārā where the mind can know God, the good and the bad, and the cause of obligations to be mandatory. However, in the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ interpretation, the reason’s position is more advanced, namely knowing the God Almighty and the existence of an eternal afterlife (resurrection).

The continuation of the problem of the ability of reason and revelation is the function of revelation. According to the Muʿtazilah and Mātūrīdīyah Samarkand, revelation provided confirmation and information about any matters already found out and obtained by reason. The function of confirmation in the sense of the matters already found out and obtained by the revealed mind corroborate it. At the same time, the function of information is to detail and tell matters not been achieved by reason. Although this does not mean that revelation is not essential, it is still necessary to tell how to thank God, perfect the knowledge of the good and the bad, and explain the details of the rewards and punishments that humans will receive in the Hereafter.27

Meanwhile, for the Ash’ariyah, the function of revelation is substantial; without revelation, humans will not know what is good and bad and will not know what their obligations are. It will not even be considered in the Hereafter about the deeds already committed.28 The verses of the Quran used explicitly as arguments to support the opinions of these two groups (rational and traditional) are to the knowledge of the author of the verses of the Quran regarding the function of reason and revelation.

The Interpretation of Mind (Tafsir Akal) of MoRA has limitations to finding out about the right way to thank Allah;29 certainty and forms of retribution in the Hereafter;30 the right way and path for happiness in this world, then Allah sent the Apostles to bring religion and the path they should follow for their happiness in this world and the Hereafter.31
Therefore, revelation (religion) becomes guidance for human life in matters of belief (‘aqidah), laws (sharī’ah), and other rules of life.

Revelation is added containing the subject matter of religion, norms, wisdom, and instructions to find the path of human happiness in the world and the Hereafter. The happiness of beings in general also contains knowledge of the unseen, past, present, and future. Even the Apostles, let alone the people, did not know the details of the Shari’ah and its signs before the revelation to them. This is the content of al-Shu’arā’: 52.

From the excerpt above, it can be concluded that, although it is not directly (explicitly) said in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs that the function of revelation is as a source of information, the revelation is knowledge received by the Apostles from God as a form of the word of God and not sought (attempted) to obtain it. This means that revelation is a source of information that depends on whom He chooses. In line with that, it also means that whether or not revelation or religion is revealed to the Apostles is the right of Allah.

**Free Will and Predestination**

Free will and predestination discuss whether humans have the freedom to have a will and act to realize their actions or be forced (fatalism). For the Muʿtaṣilah, humans have the freedom and power to realize their actions. God gives power (potential) beforehand and based on their freedom, humans use power to realize their actions. Therefore, human actions are essentially their actions. Māturīdīyah Samarkand divided actions into actions of God in the form of power creation (al-istiṭāʿah) in humans and their actions using power. Humans are given the freedom to realize their actions. Therefore, human actions are their actions in an actual sense, not in a figurative sense. The verses of the Quran used as arguments are as follows: Āli ‘Imrān: 133, al-Nisāʾ: 79, al-Baqarah: 108, al-Aḥqāf: 46, al-Tawbah: 82, al-Kahf: 29, al-Thaghābun: 2, for examples:

\[
\text{صَابَكَ مِن سَيِّئَة فَمِن نَّفسِكَ}
\]

Whatever good befalls you is from Allah, and whatever ill befalls you is from yourself (Al-Nisaʾ:79)

\[
\text{فَمَن شَآءَ فَليُؤمِن وَمَن شَآءَ فَليَكُفُر}
\]

And say thou: the truth is from your Lord; let him therefore who will, believe, and let him who will disbelieve (Al-Kahf: 29)

\[
\text{ِي خَلَقَكُم فَمِنكُم كَفِرٌ وَمِنكُم مُّؤمِنٌ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ}
\]

He is the One Who created you, yet some of you are disbelievers.
while some are believers. And Allah is All-Seeing of what you do. (Al-Taghābun:2)\textsuperscript{36}

Al-Nisā': 79 and al-Baqarah: 108 illustrate that it is humans themselves who do their deeds, not God. For example, committing evil deeds and exchanging Faith with disbelief. If it is not a human who does it, then the act belongs to God, not humans. It is evident that it is attributed to humans, said al-Qādī ʿAbd al-Jabbār.\textsuperscript{37} Meanwhile, Ashʿariyah theologians present the concept of al-Kasb in solving the problems of free will and predestination (Qadariyah and Jabariyah). For Ashʿarī himself, the word iktisāb means that something happens because of the power created by God. It becomes an acquisition or kasb for the person with whom the action arises. In al-Lumaʿ of Ashʿarī, the meaning of the word al-Kasb is that something arises from al-muktasib (which acquires) through the intermediary of the power created. The term created and obtained implies a compromise between human weakness, God’s absolute power, and human responsibility for their actions.

In contrast, the kasb itself is created by God. Ultimately, humans are passive in their actions. Thus human actions are created by God, and there is no maker (fāʿil) for kasb except God. Thus, human actions are essentially God’s actions.\textsuperscript{38} The verses of the Qurān used as evidence to support this opinion are: al-Ṣāffāt: 96 and al-Insān: 30:

\begin{align*}
\text{وَاللُّٰ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ (Al-Sāffāt/37: 96)} & \\
\text{وَمَا تَشَآءُ إِلآَّ أَن يَشَآءَ اللَّهُ (Al-Insān: 30) } & \\
\end{align*}

And it is Allah Who created you, and whatever you do (Al-Sāffāt/37: 96)\textsuperscript{39} And you cannot will (to do so) unless Allah wills. (Al-Insān: 30)\textsuperscript{40} Al-Ashʿarī understands the word wa-mā taʿmalūn in al-Ṣāffāt/37: 96 with what you do, not what you do. Thus, the verse means that Allah created you and your deeds.\textsuperscript{41} Al-Insān: 30 means that humans cannot will something unless Allah wills that something.

Mātūridiayah Bukhārā agrees with Mātūridiayah Samarkand about the existence of two powers in humans. However, it differs when they say that humans do not have the power to create. The power in humans is only to make humans capable of committing their actions. In this case, the Creator is only God, including creating human actions. This means that humans can only do what God has created for them.\textsuperscript{42} The verses of the Quran used as evidence are al-Mulk: 13-14, al-Rūm: 22, and al-Raʿd: 16,
And one of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and
the diversity of your languages and colors. (Al-Rūm: 22)

The verse of al-Mulk: 13-14 above are understood by al-Bazdawī that
everything, including human actions, is God’s creation, such as human
speech, whispering, or speaking loudly. Al-Rūm: 22 also emphasizes that
Allah creates language and skin color differences. This means that human
speech and actions are also God’s creation. The word al-Khalq in al-Raʿd:
16 for al-Bazdawī is al-fiʿl (action) and al-ṣunʿ (artificial). Therefore,
everything that happens in heaven and the earth is God’s creation, in the
sense of God’s deeds and works.

In the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, al-Nisāʾ: 4: 79 is
interpreted that something good comes from Allah. The ill or failure that
befalls a person comes from himself, perhaps due to his/her negligence or
the negligence of others, perhaps a relative or friend.

Humans have the
freedom to choose between wanting to believe or disbelieve and committing
something good or bad. This can be understood when interpreting al-
Kahf: 29.

“The benefit of the truth returns to those who practice it. On the other
hand, the bad consequences of denying the truth return to those who
deny it. Therefore, whoever wants to believe, let him act immediately.
However, if the human chooses more disbelief than Faith or gives up
Faith in adopting disbelief, it means that he/she has committed injustice;
that is, he/she has put something out of place. Allah gives them a severe
threat by throwing them into hell.”

From the explanation above, the tendency of the interpretation of Tafsir
of MoRA in matters of Qadarīyah (free will) and Jabarīyah (predestination)
can be understood. It is not explicitly found that power, will, and action
are created by God or humans. However, it is also not found that the will
and human power to realize their actions are created by God as understood
from the Jabarīyah school. By saying that humans have ikhtiyyār (the
power to choose) and the freedom to do (realize an action or not to do)
and that being rich or poor is not a human fate, it is sunnatullāh or a
series of causalities to achieve good and bad. Thus, it can be said that the
interpretation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is somewhat closer to
the understanding of Qadarīyah than Jabarīyah in interpreting the verses
above.

Thus, a person who wants to believe or disbelieve is not the will of
Allah but the choice of man, and rich or poor is not destiny (fate) but the
effort and ability to know and use the *sunnatullāh*. Therefore, the pattern of interpretive theology in terms of interpreting verses about freedom of will and action is close to the understanding of rational theology. Even the interpretation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs that gives an appreciation of endeavor, freedom, and causality can also be understood in interpreting *al-Ra‘d*: 27, *al-Nahl*: 93, and Fātir: 8.

**God’s Absolute Power and Will**

The issue of God’s absolute power and will is related to human freedom, *sunnatullāh* (natural laws created by God for His creatures), promises, and threats that can make God’s absolute power and will no longer be absolute (limited). In other words, God’s power and will are limited by God Himself, not by anyone other than himself; this is a sign (indication) of God’s justice. The verse of the Quran that the Mu‘tazilah used as evidence is as follows.

\[
\text{وَلَنْ تَعْجَبَنَّ لِسُنَّةٍ لَّيْسَتْ لِلْيَوْمِ الْكَبِيرِ}
\]

And you will find no change in Allah’s way (QS. Al-Ahzab: 62).\(^46\)

As stated by al-Jāḥiz, the verse above is understood that objects have their nature and natural laws and will cause effects or consequences according to their nature. Moreover, nature does not change at the will of God, therefore, on contrary, there is no certainty in the sunnah of Allah for His creation.\(^47\) That is why His power and will limit God’s absolute power.

For the theologian Mātūridiyah Samarkand, God’s absolute power and will are only limited to human freedom; God’s provision does not impose arbitrary punishments on humans. The condition that God must keep His promises later in the Hereafter.\(^48\) The verses of the Quran used as a support are al-Mā‘ idah/5: 48, al-An‘ām: 149, and Yūnus: 99. For example:

\[
\text{إِنَّ لَهُمْ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ وَلَا ضَرَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانَ كَانَ عَلَيْهِمْ فَخَلَسَتْهُمْ خَلَسَتْهُمْ غَيْرَ يَنْتَظُرُونَ}
\]

If Allah had willed, He would have made you one community, but His Will is to test you with what He has given each of you. (QS. Al-Mā‘ idah/5: 48)\(^49\)

Mātūridiyah Samarkand understands the verses above that God has the power to make people believe in all. However, God does not implement it because God gives freedom and the will to humans to choose and act to become believers or non-believers.

For Ash‘ariyah and Mātūridiyah Bukhārā, God has absolute power, and will, because God is the Owner (*al-Mālik*) who is absolute and does
whatever He wants in His kingdom. No one can criticize whatever He
does, even if it is seen by human reason as unfair.\textsuperscript{50} The verses used as
evidence to support their opinion are al-Burūj: 16, Yūnus: 99, al-Sajdah:
13, al-An’ām: 112, and al-Baqarah/2: 253), for example:

\begin{verbatim}
فَعَّال لِّمَا يُرِيدُ
\end{verbatim}

Doer of whatever He will (QS. Al-Burūj: 16)\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{verbatim}
وَلَوْ شَيْتَانًا لَأَقْبِلَ أَقْبِلَ حَقَّ لِغَدِيْنِ قَوْهُ مَنِيَّ لأُمَلَّانِ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْ ذِيَّبَةٍ وَلَّا جَمِيعِينَ
\end{verbatim}

Had We willed, we could have easily imposed guidance on every soul.
But My Word will come to pass: I will surely fill up Hell with jinn and
humans all together. (QS. Al-Sajdah: 13)\textsuperscript{52}

Ashʿarīyah understands the verses above that God’s power and will is
absolute and must be valid (implemented). Nothing limits it, even God
Himself. Suppose it is not absolute, of course. In that case, God forgets
or is negligent or weak, even though it is not appropriate (impossible) for
God. Therefore, God’s power and will are absolute and must happen.\textsuperscript{53}
Like Ashʿariyah, Māturīdīyah Bukhārā also believes that God’s power and
will are absolute. God does as He will, and no one can prohibit and rule
Him, even though God’s substance.\textsuperscript{54}

It is said in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs al-An’ām: 112.
“Had it been your Lord’s Will, they would not have done such a thing.
However, Allah gives freedom to humans to choose what they will do and
go as the guidance of their minds, right or wrong. Based on that choice,
humans will be responsible for all their behavior later in the Hereafter.\textsuperscript{55}

In the Tafsir of MoRA, there is no explicit and unequivocal statement
regarding God’s absolute power and will. However, if the verses above are
examined, this interpretation seems to limit God’s absolute power and
will. The limitation lies in:
1. \textit{Sunnatullāh} (law or provision of Allah) does not change and must happen.
2. The existence of freedom given to humans to choose which path to take
   (a straight path or astray) based on that choice God will reward or punish
   later in the Hereafter.
3. The condition of Allah in carrying out His will is following His sunnah
   which has been determined based on His wisdom and knowledge of the
   Highest.
4. The certainty of God occupies His promises and threats later for humans.
If the interpretation of the verses concerning God’s absolute power and will of God in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, it seems closer to the view of rational kalam (Mātūrīdīyah Samarkand). In this rational kalam, God’s absolute power and will are limited by the sunnatullāh that does not change and is based on His wisdom and knowledge. Height, freedom given to humans, promises, and threats must be fulfilled by God in the Hereafter. The similarity of this interpretation view to Mātūrīdīyah’s understanding can be understood because this moderate understanding is more acceptable to intellectuals and the development of science is relatively anthropocentric and rational. In addition, it may be the influence of the interpretation of the reference used as a source in the writing of this book of interpretation, namely al-Maraghi’s interpretation. The view of al-Maraghi’s interpretation of the verses regarding God’s absolute power and will argues that God’s absolute power and will is limited by human endeavor, human freedom in choosing, God’s promises and threats that must be fulfilled, and the sunnatullāh which is definite and unchanging, therefore prayer cannot change the sunnatullāh.56

The idea that sunnatullāh cannot be changed by prayer is a Deism in modern theology. In this understanding, everything has been determined by its nature by God from the beginning; everything happens and runs in nature according to its characteristics; no function of prayer will change the laws of nature. For example, a person will be successful in his/her effort if he/she knows and follows his/her nature (cause and effect) for success, and he/she cannot do it only by prayer. For example, someone who wants to be an intelligent person, their nature is to study seriously, read a lot, attend various scientific meetings, and so on.

God’s Justice

All schools of Islamic theology share the same view that God is just and will not break His promises and persecute His servants.57 But, it is different in paradigms and emphasis on God’s justice. For the Muʿtazilites, God’s justice is understood that God does not do, does not choose the bad, and does not neglect His obligations to humans. His creatures and all His actions are good. Therefore, God cannot do wrong. God cannot burden man beyond his capacity and must fulfill His promise later in the Hereafter. The verses of the Quran used as evidence are: al-Anbiyāʾ: 47, Yāsin: 54, Fuṣṣilat: 46, al-Nisāʾ/4: 40, and al-Kahf: 49, for example:

اِنَّ اللَّٰها لاَ يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ وَاِنْ تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُّضٰعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِنْ لَُّنْهُ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا

Indeed, Allah never wrongs anyone even by an atom’s weight. And if
it is a good deed, He will multiply it many times over and will give a great reward out of His grace (Al-Nisâʾ: 40).

Meanwhile, the Mâtûrîdiyyah Samarkand, except for their opinion about the concept of justice for God, added that God does not repay human evil except by recompensating in kind, and God will not persecute His servants and will not break His promises already conveyed to His servants. The verses of the Quran used as evidence are as follows:

\[\text{مْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَيُْزَى إِلاَّ مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ}\]

Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgement] with a good deed will have ten times the like thereof [to his credit], and whoever comes with an evil deed will not be recompensed except the like thereof, and they will not be wronged. (Al-An`âm: 160)\(^60\)

\[\text{إِنَّ اللََّ لاَ يُْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ}\]

Surely, Allah does not break His promise (Ali Imran: 9)\(^61\)

For the Ash`ariyah and Mâtûrîdiyyah Bukhārā in understanding justice, God as the absolute Owner has absolute power and will over His creatures (His creation). In other words, God is just when God can do as He pleases in His kingdom. In this case, no specific verses of the Quran are used as naqli arguments except for the verses of the Quran on the issue of God’s absolute power and will.

The interpretation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in al-Anbiyāʾ: 47 is as follows: “That Allah in assessing or calculating the deeds of His servants in the Hereafter will establish a balance of justice that is genuinely fair so no one will be harmed in that calculation. Nothing good will be reduced, and no one who commits a crime will have an increase in punishment that causes the recipient to be wronged, even though Allah has the power to do that. Therefore, no matter how small, the deeds of humans will be received in return.

Meanwhile, Yasin: 54 is interpreted that on the Day of Judgment, all humans will receive retribution for all their deeds while living in this world. Good will be rewarded with multiple rewards, and evil will be rewarded with a balanced punishment; one person will not bear the sins of another. This is God’s justice promised to humans.\(^62\)

From the excerpts of the interpretation above, it can be concluded that the concept of God’s justice contained in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is as follows:
1. That Allah will give the rights of His servants according to what they do, no matter how small the deed, and will not be wronged (reduced) in the least and will not transfer the reward or crime of a person to another person, except to the perpetrator.
2. Allah gives double rewards to those who do good, and punishment commensurate to the perpetrators of evil or less, if Allah will.
3. Moreover, Allah’s promise to humans will be fulfilled later in the Hereafter, and Allah cannot break His promise.

Suppose that the concept of God’s justice contained in the Tafsir book of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is more inclined to the view of Māturīdīyah Samarkand, where God’s justice is as opposed to the unjust nature that is impossible for God to act unjustly. In that case, the condition of God gives commensurate punishment and God’s certainty will fulfill His promises later. In other words, the concept of God’s justice in the interpretation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is more moderate between rational and traditional.

God’s Deeds

All schools of Islamic theology share the same view that God performs His actions due to He has Qudrah and irādah, but they differ on whether God does good or bad. For traditional theologians, both Ashʿarīyah and Māturīdīyah Bukhārā understand justice that God as the Creator and the Owner has absolute will and power over His creatures and property (His creation). In other words, God is just when God can do as He pleases in His kingdom. In this case, no specific verses of the Quran are used as naqalī arguments except for the verses of the Quran on the issue of God’s absolute power and will.

For the Muʿtazilah, God’s actions are limited to good deeds because they are in line with the name of God, the Best. This means that God is incapable of doing wrong. Also, contrary to justice, it is the wrongdoers who can do evil. The verses of the Quran used as evidence are as follows.

لا يُسْتَجِبُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْتَجِبُونَ
He cannot be questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned. (Al-Anbiyāʾ: 23)

ما خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَجْلٍ مُّسَمَّى
Allah only created the heavens and the earth and everything in between for a purpose and an appointed term (Al-Rūm: 8)
According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, the verses above show evidence that God is not questioned about what He does; It is humans who are questioned. Because an excellent substance will do good (right), He does not need to be questioned about His actions because Allah has done it well (right). Thus, the Muʿtazilites argued that God was obligated to do good and best deeds (al-ṣalāḥ wa-al-aṣlaḥ). Among the good deeds done by God is to send messengers to humans.

In this matter, the Māturīdiyah Samarkand shared their opinion with the Muʿtazilah that God’s actions only concern the good. Therefore, sending the Apostle to humankind is a good deed that God must do. As far as the author knows, the verses used as arguments supporting this opinion do not yet exist.

Meanwhile, traditional theologians who hold to the absolute power, and will of God, argue that God has no obligations. Therefore, God can do whatever He wants (good and evil deeds). However, in terms of fulfilling His promises later in the Hereafter, Māturīdiyah Bukhārā believed that God must carry them out; sending an Apostle is possible for God. The verses of the Quran used as a basis are not explicitly found except for the verses about God’s Absolute power and will.

The tendency of Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to interpret verses related to God doing good and the best (al-ṣālāḥ wa-al-aṣlaḥ), not burdening humans with obligations beyond their capabilities (taklif mā lā yuṭāq), and sending messengers, and God’s obligations to keep promises and carry out His threat (al waʿd wa-al-waʿīd) later in the Hereafter. Rather inclined to the thought of Kalam Māturīdiyah Samarkand, that is, God performs His actions with His wisdom and justice and follows His plans and wills. This conclusion can be corroborated when interpreting al-ʿAnkabūt: 44, Ṣād: 27, and al-Dukhān: 38-39.

As in al-Muʾminūn: 62, Allah confirms that it has become a sunnah. His decision will not burden someone with an obligation or command unless the command can be carried out and within the limits of their power and strength. He requires no sharīʿah that is difficult to carry out and does not follow human abilities, but humans consider it heavy.

**Islamic Theology in the Tafsir Kementerian Agama**

The interpretation of the verses of kalam concerning 1) reason and revelation; 2) Human Actions and God’s Will; 3) God’s Justice and Deeds in the interpretation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs tend to be somewhat close to the rational-Māturīdiyah style of thought in Samarkand. On the other hand, it has very little in common with traditional kalam.
(Ash’ariyah and Māturīdiyah Bukhārā). In discussing the ability of reason and the function of revelation, there are similarities to the understanding of Bukhārā’s Māturīdiyah kalam. However, the opinion in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is more advanced, where reason has the potential to know God, find out that God is One, find out the good and the bad, find out the basics of good and bad, and find out the existence of God, and Afterlife. All obligations are found out through religion (revelation) brought by the apostles, and the sending of apostles is sunnatullāh not jā’iz as the opinion of the Bukhārā Māturīdiyah circles.

The similarity of the interpretation of the verses of the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ Tafsir Kalam to the rational thought of Kalam-Māturīdiyah Samarkand is as follows:

1. In the case of Qadarīyah and Jabarīyah (free will and predestination), it is said that humans have the capacity (power to choose) and the freedom to do or not to do an action. Based on that choice, Allah will reward later in the Hereafter that will not be reduced immediately. The fate that happens to humans is sunnatullāh, or the existence of a series of causalities, not God’s decree.

2. The unchanging sunnatullāh limits God’s absolute power and will, the condition of God determining His sunnatullāh according to His wisdom and knowledge of the Highest, the freedom He gives to humans, and in principle, God will keep His promises and carry out His threats.

3. God’s justice is seen as the opposite of tyranny which is impossible for God; God is just if he pays appropriate punishment, fulfills his promise, and multiplies the reward according to His will.

4. God in performing His actions follows His wisdom and justice because it does not follow His sunnah if God burdens humans beyond their capabilities (taklīf mā lā yuṭāq), does not send apostles and carry out al-wa’d wa-al-wa’id.

Conclusion

The tendency of interpreting the verses of kalam in the Tafsir of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to rational thought may be due to several things. Firstly, the interpretation books that are the references for most of the interpretations written in the modern period are relatively rational, such as the interpretation of al-Alūsī, al-Marāghī, al-Manār, al-Qāsimī, Sayyid Quṭb, and al-Waḍīḥ. Second, most of them are Egyptian scholars and direct students of al-Marāghī. The tendency of thought in al-Marāghī’s interpretation of thought is rational. Third, this interpretation is a standard book of interpretation expected to be read by many Muslims (generally
and intellectually) in Indonesia, who in the process of development and require a work spirit or an effort to rise from setbacks quickly, require a rational view. Fourth, indirectly, this rational style of tafsir is a result of modern developments in the Islamic world, one of which is characterized by a rational and appreciative attitude toward the development of modern science and technology, and in the early seventies in Indonesia, there was an Islamic discourse. Modernity is being developed in Islamic universities such as the State Islamic Institute (IAIN), which is now the State Islamic University (UIN). However, there were no alumni of IAIN/IAIN in the team that compiled this interpretation, UIN or Western alumni.[]

**Endnotes**

13. There is a difference from this systematic point of view to *al-Manhaj al-Basit*, *al-Manhaj al-Wasit*, and *al-Manhaj al-Mabsut*, there is another term *al-Mukhtasar* (brief), *al-Wasit* (medium), and *al-Mabsut* (large). Others divide *Itnab*, *Ijazi*, and *Musaabah*. Abdul Djalal HA, 78-81. ‘Ali Hasan al-‘Ariđ, 42.
22. Mukadimah, 33-34
23. Mukadimah, 21 and 36
43. Kitab al-Uṣūl, 102-104; see also M. Yunan Yusuf, 97.
64. Departemen Agama RI, *Al-Qur’an dan Terjemahannya*, 498.
Bibliography