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An Examination of al Imam al Alusi's Contributions to Selected Theological Issues in His Tafsir

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Abstrak

Teologi sebagai salah satu cabang ilmu dalam studi Islam masih menjadi perdebatan di kalangan umat Islam terutama di zaman kontemporer. Artikel ini memberikan resume kontribusi al-Imam al-Alusi, sebagai mufassir, pada diskusi teologis dalam Magnum Opus-nya: Ruhul-Maani. Untuk mencapai hal ini, makalah ini mengkaji pandangannya tentang beberapa isu teologis yang dipilih dalam upayanya untuk menafsirkan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an dengan tujuan utama menemukan kualitas dan kesesuaian argumennya serta kesesuaiannya dengan prinsip-prinsip dasar dan sumber-sumber Islam. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk berbagi informasi tentang pendiriannya dan memberikan klarifikasi jika diperlukan. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa diskusi teologis al-Imam al-Alusi mencakup pandangan sekte-sekte besar Islam; Sunni, Syi'ah, Mu'tazilah, Asy'arites, antara lain dan membawa pendapatnya sendiri. Juga ditetapkan bahwa perbedaan teologis lahir dari pemikiran filosofis dalam membela sekte individu. Diungkapkan pula bahwa divergensi tersebut tidak mempengaruhi fundamental teologi Islam.

Kata kunci: karya besar, teologi Islam, tema-tema al-Quran

Abstract

Theology as a branch of knowledge in Islamic studies, it's still a debate among Muslims. Especially in contemporary times. This article provides a resume of al-Imam al-Alusi's contribution, as commentator, to the theological discussions in his *Magnum Opus: Ruhul-Maani*. To achieve this, this paper examines his views on several theological issues selected in his attempt to interpret the verses of the Qur'an with the main aim of discovering the quality and suitability of his arguments and their conformity with the basic principles and sources of Islam. This paper aims to share information about its stance and provide clarification if needed. The findings reveal that al-Imam al-Alusi's theological discussion includes the views of the major Islamic sects; Sunnis, Shi'ites, Mu'tazilites, Ash'arites, among others and brought their own opinions. It is also established that theological differences arise from philosophical thought in defense of individual sects. It was also revealed that the divergence did not affect the fundamentals of Islamic theology.

Word key: Islamic theologi, magnum opus, themes of Quran

Introduction

Tafsir is one of the Islamic branches that encapsulates other Islamic sciences (Al-Salafi, 1998) as well as modern sciences like Zoology (*Ilmu al-Hayawan*), Geology (*Jiyulajiyya*), Astronomy (*Ilmu al-Falak*), Geophysics (*Jiyufiziyya*), physiology (*Fiziyulajiyya*), psychology (*Ilmu al-Nafs*), etc. On this Usmani says:

This (tafsir) is a vast subject that the knowledge of almost every art and science of the world can be incorporated in it because sometimes in a very short sentence the Quran expresses an endless world of realities and secrets... Hence, through intellect, thinking, experiments and observation, different subjects become part of the Science of tafsir (Usmani, 2006, hal. 341).

One of the *tafsir* works that excellently covers the aforementioned branches of knowledge is the *Magnum Opus* of al-Imam al-Alusi known as *tafsir Ruhul al-Maani*. In his submission on this matter, Abdullahi al-Bukhari says about it thus:

It is among the most available voluminous exegeses of the Quran in size with more abundant themes and knowledge. The author presented therein extract of his knowledge and (other) valuable researches which may not likely be found in other books (except it)(Al-Bukhari, 1999, hal. 63).

Theology is a theme as well as one of the Islamic sciences through which al-Imam al-Alusi has displayed his vast erudition in his massive commentary on the glorious Quran. Thus, he was described as an Ottoman theologian (Hamza, Rizvi, & Farhana Mayer, 2010, hal. 74) because of his

contributions to theological discussions which cut across virtually all the major Islamic sects; *Shi'a*, *Mu'tazilah*, *Sufiyyah*, *Ahlusunnah*, etc, as a result of his in-depth knowledge in various branches as mentioned by Mahmud Shukri (2007). Al-Imam Al-Alusi's multifarious theological dispositions made it difficult for scholars after him, to identify him with a particular sect or *Madh-hab*. Nafi remarks:

By the time of his death, the Alusis were becoming firmly established as a recognized ulama family, members of which would continue to play important roles in the intellectual and political life of Iraq and the Arab Mashriq. The grand Alusi, as Abu al-Thana al-Alusi was known, however, was, and still is, a controversial Muslim Scholar whose intellectual genealogy and leanings seem to be difficult to categorize and too contradictory to pin down (Nafi, 2002).

His legacy is disputed and controversial, and his relationship both to Sufism and the rising Salafiyya movement is interesting for not being mutually exclusive, at least not in his case (Hamza et al., 2010).

Based on the above, it is apposite to observe here that al-Imam al-Alusi could not have absolutely leaned to all the schools of thought theologically. It is against this backdrop that this paper intends to assess his theological views on some selected creedal issues through which a conclusion shall be made on his theological affiliation. This will go a long way in not making him a non or less controversial scholar.

Theology: Its Evolution and Relation with *Tafsir*

The word theology is a term that is sometime and commonly used to denote the Arabic word "*Aqeeda*" which can linguistically mean creed (Newby, 2002, hal. 30), dogma, doctrine of faith and ideology. It is however further used as a science through which Islamic creed (*al-Aqeedatu al-Islamiyyah*) can be properly understood and preserved against misconceptions and interpolations (Ahmed, 2013, hal. 5-6) as well as doubt and denials (Syahrastani, n.d.). This is why in Islam it is traditionally referred to as *Ilmu al-Kalam*-Islamic Theology-which is also the same as *Ilmu al-aqa'id* (Hughes, 1985, hal. 202).

According to Ash-Shaharastani (n.d.), theology is a branch of knowledge that deals with the existence of Allah, His essence and attributes; the nature of the prophets, their revelations, missions, instructions and distinctions. It is a discipline that brings discursive arguments to the service of

religious creeds and doctrines in order to provide a place for reflexion and meditation, for the main aim of explaining and defending the contents of faith in Islam.¹⁵ In general, it has to do with the presentation and explanation of the fundamental articles of Islamic faith as well as other related doctrines to each of the articles for the purpose of avoiding misconceptions, contradictions and deception in the defense of the religion and particularly the individual sect.

In the Islamic history, it has not been recorded that the Prophet and his companions involved in theological argument during the prophetic era but they engaged in teachings that could increase their faith through Quranic revelations and the explanation and guidance of the Prophet. This was why the word “*Aqidah*” does not appear in both the Quran and *Hadith* unlike the word “*Iman*” which appears not less than forty-five (45) times in the glorious Quran only. Hence, there was no agreement among the Islamic scholars on the exact date of emergence of theological disagreements in Islam. These disagreements can be summed up as follows:

First. the Quran as the origin of the emergence of Islamic Theology. According to Ahmed, the series of refutations made by the glorious Quran of the false principles and ideals held by some people and religions during the time of the Prophet opened the door for Islamic theology (Ahmed, 2013, hal. 3–4). Some Quranic verses are cited by Ahmed to buttress this as the origin of Islamic Theology. These include among others:

Does not man see that we have created him from nutfah (mixed male and female sexual discharge–semen drops). Yet behold he (stands forth) as an open opponent. And he puts forth for us a parable, and forgets his own creation. He says: “Who will give life to these bones after they have rotten and have become dust? Say: He will give life to them Who Created them for the first time! And He is All-Knower of every creation. QS al Yasin: 77–79

He also cited QS. al-Nahl:125 which is on *dawah* methodology to drive home his submission. After this, he says:

Course Muslim theologians pursued this Quranic injunctions and examples by going into debate with the opponents of Islam, widening the range of their defense whenever the antagonists widened the range of their attack. Eventually, this led to the emergence and development of speculative theology of Islam known as Ilmu al-Kalam.(Ahmed, 2013)

This view was also affirmed by Ahmad Amin who preceded Ahmed in his book entitled “Ḍuḥa al-Islam”

Second, the emergence of Khawarij and other sects from the battle of *Ṣiffin* in the reign of Caliph Ali (Newby, 2002). The battle of *Ṣiffin* broke out between Caliph Ali and Muawiyah as well as their supporters in the year 37 A.H/657 C.E and lasted for almost seventy-seven (77) days. It was through this encounter that a large number of Caliph Ali's supporters withdrew from him and separated from the Muslim *Ummah* because of the arbitration panel set up to settle the dispute. Thus, they became the first to proclaim the first theological discourse in Islamic history which is “*La Ḥukmu illa lillah*” (Newby, 2002) i.e. “Judgment belongs to Allah alone”. This opinion is shared by Gardet in his article on *Ilmu al-Kalam*

Third, the Emergence of *Mu'tazilah* sect in the second A.H./eight C.E. century. This sect was founded by Wasil bin Aṭa and then Amr bin Ubayd in the city of Basra. This group was known for her rational argument on creedal issues (Sheikh, 1974, hal. 54). Thus; it was credited with the origin of theological discussion in Islam according to Gordon D. Newby in his Concise Encyclopedia of Islam (Newby, 2002). *Fourth*, muslims contact with as well as the influence of the Greek philosophy and Christian theology. This took place in the Abbasid period of Islam when Islam witnessed more converts from Christianity, Judaism and Atheism as well as Persians and Indians. Thus, there was the need to defend Islamic faith against the Christians, Jews and Philosophers' condemnation through the use of logic (*al-Manṭiq*) and philosophy (*al-falsafah*) (Ahmed, 2013; Sheikh, 1974)

After a critical study of the aforementioned views of both early and modern Islamic Studies Scholars, it can be submitted that Islamic theological discussion and debate came into existence after the demise of the Prophet and specifically, during the caliphate of Ali bin Abi Talib in the battle of *Ṣiffin* and camel, through the first Islamic sect *Khawarij*. It was, however, metamorphosed through the efforts of the *Mu'tazilites* into what is known today as Islamic Theology to connote *al-Aqidatul-Islamiyyah*. These efforts include the study of Greek philosophy and Logic to engage in philosophical argument with the non-Muslims by using Quranic verses, *Hadith* and dialectics along with their rationalist approach which yielded positive against the Christians, Jews and Philosophers. It is apposite to refute here that Quranic injunctions did not lead to the emergence of Islamic Theology as opined by Amin and Ahmed. Rather, the Quranic verses were used as

supporting evidences in theological discussions. It does not sound well to say that Allah is debating theological issues with mankind through His Prophet as Islamic theology is all about theological debates. The Quran is only establishing the right beliefs through explanation and clarification of ambiguities.

Based on the attitudes of using Quranic verses as proofs by different sects in theological discussions, some *mufassirun* have delved into the explanation on theology-related verses of the Quran in order to refute any interpretation or application of theological verses to suit sectarian doctrines in contrary to the obvious creed in both the Quran and *Hadith* (Al-Aziz, 2003). This situation gave rise to another kind of *tafsir* known as *at-Tafsir al-Kalami* (Theology based *tafsir*). Among the Quranic Exegetes who have incorporated theological discussions into their *Ttafsir* works is al-Imam al-Alusi, an Arab Ottoman theologian of mid-19th century.

Al-Imam al-Alusi and Theological Discussions in *Ruḥu al-Maani*

Al-Imam al-Alusi has, in his *Magnum opus*, afforded the contemporary Muslims an insight into perhaps almost what has been said by various Islamic sects in the past on theological issues surrounding the Islamic articles of faith and other creedal issues. The intellectual honesty of al-Imam al-Alusi is commendable and appreciated judging from the way he presents theological arguments and views from various Islamic sects. His ways of analyzing the theological views depict that he had respect for their upholders even if he did not share their opinions and that he was well grounded in the knowledge of philosophy and logic which were the keys to theological discussions before, during and after his era (Nafi, 2002).

It is however interesting to note that, based on a critical study of al-Alusi's mammoth commentary, his theological discourse could not be devoid of some general mistakes of the classical writers mentioning the views of some sects and their scholars without citing their work. And in some cases, works are cited but without mentioning the pages, volumes and even the authors.³³ All these in the contemporary period, especially in the academic circle, cannot be overlooked as documentation of references is as important as the work in order to avoid plagiarism. It is on this note that this study shall be focusing on the following theological issues in his *Ruhul-Maani*: (i) Names and Attributes of Allah (ii) The Createdness of the Quran (iii) The Concept of Intercession.

Name and Attributes of Allah (Ismu dh-Dhat wa Asma' al-Şiffat)

Al-Imam al-Alusi agrees, in his discussion on the word “Allah”, with other theologians such as Al-Ghazali, Ar-Razi, etc., who were of the view that it is an Arabic word as well as a proper noun that is specifically meant for the essence of Allah, also that, it is neither a derivative nor an attribute but a proper name which makes it impossible for mankind to bear. Had it being an attribute or a derivative, nothing would have prevented mankind from bearing it. Likewise, it is a unique name for the Creator on which all other attributes depend and every mind is directed towards (Alusi, 1997, hal. 96).

Al-Imam al-Alusi makes it clear that it is the proper and non-derivative nature of this name that makes *Kalimatu-Sh-Shahadah* (Statement of Testimony) to denote the absolute Unity of God which cannot be achieved through other names or attributes of His. For instance, it will not be correct and acceptable for a non-Muslim to become a Muslim by uttering “*La ilaha illa al-Rahman*” (i.e. There is none worthy of being worship except the Merciful) (Alusi, 1997). This is because being merciful can be found in other creatures. He thus represents the opinion of some other theologians as follows:

Those that were of the view that the word “Allah” has origin. According to al-Imam al-Alusi, two origins were identified; “*Ilahun*” as contained in *asy-Syihah* and “*al-Ilah*” as contained in *al-Kash-Shaf*. He then debunks this view with the explanation of Ibn Malik, who said that “Allah” is among the proper nouns which “al” is affiliated to their composition. And that the word “*al-Ilah*” is not its origin because the two differ in word and meaning i.e morphologically, as the word “Allah” is special to Him, the Most High, both in *Jahiliyyah* and Islamic period while the word “*al-Ilah*” is a name for everything that is being worshipped. However, 'al-Imam al-Alusi disagrees with Ibn Malik on the meaning given to “*al-ilah*” at the end of his discussion thus:

I say: no qualm about it (the discussion of Ibn Malik) if not for his assertion that “al-Ilah” is a name for everything that is being worshipped. Al-Balqini has indeed refuted this statement by saying it (the word Al-Ilah) is used only for the deserved being to be worshipped (Allah), exalted be His. And whoever uses it for others besides Him has been judged to be disbeliever. Thus He has sent Messengers to invite and guide him (to the right path). And this is similar to the Christian's usage of Allah for (Prophet) Isa (Alusi, 1997).

He has also supported his position, that “*al-Ilah*” is used solely for Allah, with the statement of As-Sayyid As-Sanad and Al-Allamah As-Sad. Thus it could be concluded that it is only meant for Allah alone as it has been used in the glorious Quran more than one hundred places. (Abdulbaqi, 1428, hal. 47–49) However it is apposite to state here that the word “*al-Ilah*” or “*Ilahun*” is lesser in weight compare to the word “Allah”. Though, they both have similar characteristics of *Ubudiyyah* (i.e servitude), *Ilahun* or *al-Ilah* can be: first, Pluralised as *Alihah* which has been used thirty-four (34) times in the noble Quran. (Abdulbaqi, 1428) For instance, QS. Al-An’am: 19 says:

Can you verily bear witness that besides Allah there are other alilah (gods)? Say: I bear no (such) witness! Say: But in truth He (Allah) is the only one Ilah (God). And truly I am innocent of what you join in worship with Him.

While the word “Allah” cannot be pluralized.

Second, Affiliated with the creatures as used in QS. al-Nass: 3 thus: “*Ilahu-n-Nas*” (i.e The God of Mankind). While the word “Allah” cannot be used with any creature, it stands independently. *Third*, traced etymologically in various ways, according to al-Imam al-Alusi. while the word “Allah” cannot be traced etymologically, based on the submission of the majority of the Islamic theologians. *Fourth*, falsely used for the acclaimed god(s) by their worshippers as used in the glorious Quran and that is why it is being pluralized.

Thus, the word “Allah” is nothing but a proper name signifying the essence of Allah and is not meant for anything else except Him. This shows His Originality as the First and Last that nothing exists before and after Him. Should the name “Allah” has origin, the general implication is that the original name has been existing before Him which is absolutely in correct and unacceptable either based on reason or revelation.

The opinion of al-Balakhi which states that the word “Allah” is not an Arabic word but a Hebrew or Syriac word (*abbirani aw sirrayani*) thas is being Arabicized from the word “*Laha*” which means “The powerful person”. Another source not cited by al-Imam al-Alusi views it to be from the Aramaic word “*Elaha*” which, is derived by contraction from “*El*” and “*Elohim*” (Cornell, 2005) while in the Hebrew and Syriac word “*Laha*”, there is elision of elongation letter and the incorporation of “*al*” to form “Allah”. al-Alusi contends this view by saying:

There is no proof on it (being a Hebrew or Syriac word) and cannot be like that. The Jews and Christians usage of the word (i.e Allah) can never be an evidence as the possibility of concordance in languages along with the saying of theirs that "Ta'Allaha" and "Allaha", rejects it because of the conjugation therein which is by omitting the elongation (letter) and introducing "al" (i.e definite article "the"). This given description is a proof that it was never a proper noun in the non-Arabic language. Proper noun has been made a condition for a non-Arabic word not to change as conjugation makes it weak. Thus, this contention is degraded from being considered as it cannot be supported by either reason or revelation. The opinion shared by most of the regarded scholars, like Ash-Shafi'i, Muhammad bin al-Hasan, Al-Ash'ari and most of his students, al-Khattabi, Imam Haramayin, al-Ghazali, Fakhruddin al-Razi, Majority of the Theologians (al-Usuliyyin) and the Jurists as well as a narration on the choice of al-Khalil, Sibawaih, al-Mazini and Ibn Kisan, is that it is basically an Arabic and proper noun meant only for His essence (Alusi, 1997).

Based on the above, should anyone raise that the word "Allah" is the same as "God" in English Language as it is also used by the other religions and the non-arabic speakers, it will be said that: firstly, it is the same if both the linguistic and contextual usage of the word "God" refer to the Supreme Being, Who deserves to be worshipped from eternity to eternity. Secondly, it is not the same if it depicts lesser being in essence and significance to the Supreme Being both linguistically and contextually. For instance the majority of the later Christians believe in God the father, God the son and God the Holy spirit to be one God, (Thomas, 1994, hal. 103) as a core tenet of their faith. This is a Trinitarian belief of God which is against the Unitarian belief of the Muslims about the understanding of Allah, the Supreme. In the glorious Quran Allah says in QS. Al-Maedah: 73 thus:

Surely, disbelievers are those who said: "Allah is the third of the three (in a trinity)". But there is no 'Ilah (none who has the right to be worshipped) but one 'Ilah (God -Allah). And if they cease not from what they say, verily a painful torment will befall on the disbelievers among them.

Likewise in Kelly (1968), there is the example of apotheosis (i.e divinization or deifination) of Jesus Christ which is also against the Unitarian concept of Allah in Islam. In the glorious Quran, Allah says in QS. Al-Maedah: 72 thus:

Surely, they have disbelieved who say: "Allah is the Messiah ('Isa -Jesus) the son of Maryam (Mary)." But the messiah (Isa-Jesus) said: "O children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord" verily, whoever sets up

partners (in worship) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden paradise to him, and the Fire will be his abode. And for the Zalimun (Polytheists and wrong doers) there are no helpers.

Should anyone also argue that the non-Muslims in the Arab world refer to their God as “Allah” in Arabic language, it will be said that it is a misuse of word just like putting the right peg in the wrong hole. Anything that does not deserve to be an object of worship from eternity to eternity and does not possess unique attributes by necessity or does share those attributes with others, does not qualify to be named Allah. For instances, the Arab Christians proclaim their Trinitarian belief in Arabic thus:

English Language	Transliteration
God the Father	<i>Allahu al-Ab</i>
God the Son	<i>Allahu al-Ibn</i>
God the Holy Spirit	<i>Allahu al-Ruhul al-Qudus</i>

From the discussion above, it can be deduced that the word “Allah” has been used for three distinct persons because of the use of definite article which connotes three “Gods” with different descriptions that cannot be termed as qualities or attributes for a single being. However, it is believed and has been taken as a doctrine in the Christendom that the three “persons” are truly distinct from one another in their relation to one another but share common substance and nature (i.e *communio substantiae*) (Kelly, 1968). Thus, God is three consubstantial persons. This belief is not in conformity with the contextual meaning of the word “Allah” which is a proper noun. This is also discussed by al-Imam al-Alusi who after presenting this view on trinity concludes that the validity of their claim, that three distinct persons are one, is not only baseless but also unsatisfactory. And that it is against the unity as well as self-sufficient qualities of Allah. Likewise, all their logical explanation in driving home this dogma is far away from the true understanding in one million times (Alusi, 1997). Hence, it should not be used in this regard by anybody as a loanword.

The opinion that the word "Allah" can be traced etymologically as a derivative name from different words like:

"Alaha" to deify and become a deity

"Aliha" to be confused, worried and perplexed

"walaha/waliha" to be confused, distracted and sad

"Laha" to be exalted or invisible to the eye

It can also be from "Alah al-Fashil idza wala'a bi Ummihi" when a young camel is inclined to its mother. Then, it is used for the worshippers when they are also inclined to their Lord with humility at the time of adversity.

It is also from -alaha- which means *fazi'a* i.e to be afraid of, terrified by and frightened by:

al-Imam al-Alusi refutes all the aforementioned points one after the other from grammatical point of view and at the end he says:

And perhaps, you will count that insignificant here. Infant the discussion is surprising .

To appreciate the specialty in the word "Allah" showing the essence of the Supreme Being behind the creation and control of the universe and what it entails, al-Imam al-Alusi presents some peculiar characteristics of it which cannot be found in other names and attributes of God. These are:

First, if the letter *alif* (i.e *Hamzah*) is deleted from the word "Allah", it will remain "lillahi" which is still referring to the Supreme Being- God-. For example QS. al-Baqarah:284 says: "To Allah belong all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth "

Second, also, if the letter *Lam* is removed from what remains after the deletion of *Hamzah* (*lillahi*), it will remain *lahu* which is still referring to Allah that He has full possession of everything. For instance, QS. al-An'am: 13 reads:

And to Him belongs whatsoever exists in the night and the day, and He is the All -Hearing, the All-knowing.

Third, again, if letter *Lam* is obliterated from the leftover after removing *Hamzah* and *Lam*, it will be left with "al-hau" that carries "Domma" from the word "Huwa" which is also referring to God, the Almighty. For example, QS. al-Ikhlās: 1 says: "Say: He is Allah (the) One"

From the above discussion of al-Imam'al-Alusi, it can be deduced that each of the Arabic letters that form the word "Allah" has an independent meaning to show the uniqueness of the name "Allah" from other names and qualities. After a long discussion on the Essence of Allah –*Ismu al-Dhat* –, al-Imam'al-Alusi concludes that:

The one preferable to me- not based on dogmatism – is that this great name (Allah) is a topic on the Essence of God that embraces all other attributes (Alusi, 1997).

With regards to the attributes of Allah (*Siffatullah*), al-Imam al-Alusi, like Fakhruddin al-Razi (2012) and al-Ghazali, (2012, hal. 95) has been influenced by the Ash'arite theological view, which he studied with his father and cousin along with the understanding of the *Salaf* as he himself often mention in his theological discussion. This, however, should not be taken as an attempt to exonerate him from flaw in this discussion.

al-Imam al-Alusi observes that Allah possesses some attributive names with which He describes Himself to mankind. These attributive names are not identical with the attributes of other beings, even though they can be associated with mankind but without comparison in their perfection. Though they are regarded as names, in the real sense they describe the '*Ismu-dh-Dhat*, i.e., Proper name of the Supreme Being (Allah). According to al-Ghazali as quoted by al-Imam al-Alusi, the word "Al-Asma'" in QS. al-A'raf: 180, which affirms that Allah had the most beautiful names, means the composed words that are pointing to different meanings. They are given to Allah by Himself, His Prophet and the Consensus (*Ijma'*) of the *Ummah* while *Qiyas* (analogical deduction) is exempted from being among the sources of getting the attributive names of Allah.

He argues further that authentic *Sunnah* (*al-Sunnatu al-Syahihah*) as well as good *Sunnah* (*As-Sunnat al-Hasanah*) should be used when sourcing for Allah's attributive names while the very weak *Hadith* should be avoided. Should anyone, based on this view of al-Imam al-Alusi, argue that a weak narration is ascribed to the Prophet while *al-Qiyas* is a personal effort of an individual, especially a *Mujtahid*, thus, conclude that Allah's name in a weak hadith can be used, it will be said thus: Allah's names are to be used for supplication which is an act of worship (*Ibadah*); and which cannot be established except by a definite proof. Also, Allah is Most Exalted and Magnificent than to be called with doubtful names. Therefore, the undoubtful names in the Quran and authentic *Sunnah* are sufficient enough for

supplication instead of the divergent ones. Certainty of knowledge is only needed to be applied as well as avoidance of self-desire in order not to fall victim of those mentions in QS. A'raf: 180 which reads:

And (all) the most beautiful names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them and leave the company of those who use profanity in His names. They will be requited for what they used to do.

Commenting on the above verse, al-Imam al-Alusi establishes, in line with the *Hadith* of Abu Hurairah, that Allah has ninety-nine names but he contends that His names are uncountable. That is, not limited to ninety-nine (99) as the hadith is only confirming the reward for whoever memorizes them, believes and act accordingly with them. This argument of his is first supported by him with the *Hadith* recorded by al-Bayhaqi, Ibn Hibban, Ahmad, at-Ṭabarani and others on the authority of Abdullahi bin Mas'ud that the Messenger of Allah-said:

O Allah! I am your slave, the son of your slave. My forelock is in Your Hand. Your judgment of me is inescapable. Your trial of me is just. I am invoking You by all the names that You call Yourself, that You have taught anyone in Your Creation, that You have mentioned in Your Book, or that You have kept unknown. Let the Quran be the delight of my heart, the light of my chest, the remover of my sadness and the pacifier of my worries.

He then gives the general agreement *ittifaqul Ulama'* of the scholars on this as recorded by an-Nawawi. Meanwhile, the *Hadith* of Tirmidhi that enlisted the ninety-nine names of Allah has been studied by al-Imam al-Alusi critically and thus points out that; it is not found in most narrations except Tirmidhi; there are some other narration that differ with it in the list of some names, hence there is doubt therein.

In defense and establishment of the Divine attributive names of Allah, unlike the Mu'tazilites who denied the ascription of *Ṣiffat* (attributes) to Allah's essence, al-Imam al-Alusi supports the Ash'arites and others theologians in maintaining the attributes inherent in Him (i.e His Essence) and in addition to His essence as it befit Him. Thus, he identifies different kinds of Allah's attributes which include among others: *Aṣ-Ṣiffatu-dh-Dhatiyyah* (Essential Attributes) and *al-Ṣiffatu Salbiyyah* (Negative Attributes). Others are *al-Ṣiffatu al-Thubutiyyah* (constant attributes) and *al-Shiffatu al-Idafiyyah* (Subsidiary Attributes).

Among them all, the most important are the essential attributes of Allah, which are also known, according to al-Imam al-Alusi, *al-Şiffatun Nafsiyyatun* (Alusi, 1997). They are attributes that make Allah to be distinct from others as they are inherent in Him and in addition to His essence and not in His existence. They are not identical with Allah's Essence in contrary to the Mu'tazilites who held that they are identical with His Essence. For instance, the Mu'tazilites hold the view that Allah is Knowing (*'Alim*), Powerful (*Qadir*), Seeing (*Başir*), etc. but these attributes are same with the essence of Allah as they cannot be separated from Him and He from them. This is why one of the Mu'tazilites scholars Abul Hudhay al-Allaf- says, as quoted in al-Ibanah, (Al-Ashari, 2011, hal. 56–57).

Surely, the knowledge of Allah is He, Allah Himself

The above assertion is necessary according to them in order to avoid “plurality of eternals” as explained (Sharif, 1963, hal. 200) by Mir Valiuddin. However, it is apposite to state here that this belief is against the textual study of the Quran in which Allah is not only, for example, ascribing knowledge to Himself as contained in QS. Fathir: 11, QS al. Baqarah: 255, QS. al-Nisa: 166, QS. Yunus: 39 and QS al-Nisa:47 but also call Himself the All-Knowing in nothing less than one hundred and forty (140) places in the Quran. It will be absurd and superfluous not to ascribe this essential attribute to Allah in addition to His essence as it befit Him in His Majesty. This is why, He is regarded as the Absolute, Unique, Incomparable and Supreme Being.

Thus, al-Imam al-Alusi identifies seven (7) basic and essential attributes of Allah as follows; knowledge (*al-'Ilm*), Will (*al-'Iradah*), Power (*al-Qudrah*), Speech (*al-Kalām*), Hearing (*as-Sam'*), Seeing (*al-Başar*) and Life (*al-Hayah*) (Al-Ashari, 2011). All these attributes are output of His beneficence, benevolence and compassion (*Rahmah*) which makes Him as *ar-Rahman* (the Most compassionate, Beneficent and Benevolent). If not so, he will not be living as His existence brings other thing into existence; He will know nothing about the creatures (*Mawjudat*); He will not be controlling the creatures for orderliness; there will not be guidance from Him through His speech; the complain of the creatures will not be heard by Him and their actions will not be put to check.

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that the attribute of life, as argued by al-Imam al-Alusi, is a prerequisite for other attributes as they all rely on it for their existence and is free from being ascribed to

anything other than the Essence of Allah. This is why He, Allah, is known as *al-Hayyu* (The Ever-Living), Who has been living before the existence of anything and shall continue to exist when nothing shall be in existence. Likewise, it may be submitted that these attributes are challenge to the rationalists (Mu'tazlites) to reexamine their position on the attributes of Allah. This re-examination should be preceded by a theological question: can any being, which possesses not the seven identified essential attributes, be regarded as God, the Supreme?

In the case of Negative attributes (*al-Syiffatu al-Salbiyyah*), they are not ascribed and affiliated to Allah, Who is devoid of any deficiency. They are best described other beings and purify Allah from being comparable to His creatures in any way, condition and description. Through these attributes, Allah is exonerated from any weakness, shortcoming, error and imperfection. Example of these is contained in QS. Baqarah: 255 where Allah is exonerated from slumber and sleep. That is, Allah never slumbers not to think of sleep which are deficiencies in mankind particularly and all the living creatures generally. al-Imam al-Alusi then observes after his discussion on this that:

There is an emphasis in the verse that He, the Exalted, is an Ever living Everlasting. This is because sleep is a deficiency against (His) immortality. His attributes, the Exalted, are ancients that will never vanish. And indeed whoever is afflicted with sleep and defeat can never become a necessary being Wajibu al-Wujud (Creator) eternally; a knowledgeable with endless knowledge and a strong protector (Alusi, 1997).

Some other examples can be found in QS. Maryam: 64 which negate forgetfulness in the attributes of Allah and Q20: 52 where Allah is exonerated from committing error, mistakes and going astray. Another very important attribute to be taken away from the essence of Allah is fatigue, tiredness and weariness. He was never tired after the creation of the creatures in six days to the extent of taking a rest as contained in QS. Qaf: 38 which reads:

And indeed We created the heaven and the earth and all between them in six Days and nothing of fatigue touched us.

Commenting on the above verse, al-Imam al-Alusi observes that the use of “*Tanwin-Nunation*” on the word “*Lugub*” which means “fatigue or tiredness or weakness” is to belittle or degrade it (Cowan, 1983, hal. 6). That is, nothing of fatigue as small as anything befall Allah. It is apposite to state here that the negative attribute in this verse is one of the cogent features that

distinct the concept of God in Islam from other religions either revealed or not. Thus, al-Imam al-Alusi says:

This, as said by Qatadah and others, is refuting the claim of the ignorant Jews that He, Exalted be His Affairs, started the creation of the Universe on Sunday and finished it on Friday. He then took a rest on Saturday and reclined on His Throne. Glorified and Exalted is He above what (false) they say about Him (Alusi, 1997).

All the afore-discussed points are clear proofs from the *Magnum Opus* of al-Imam al-Alusi to confirm and establish the existence and essence of Allah, which are not the same but depend on each other, through His Proper name (*Ismu al-Dhat*) and Attributive names (*Asma al-Shiffat*). With all these and other explanations and discussion, it can be concluded that, Allah's essence is still incomprehensible and unfathomable absolutely as well as transcendental.

The Createdness of the Quran

As discussed under the attributes of Allah that *al-Kalam* (Speech) is among the essential attributes of Allah which are not identical but in addition to His essence. This means He is *al-Mutakallim* (the speech maker or speaker) from whom speech originates and whose speech is not the same as He, Himself (essence) but adding more understanding to his essence. Thus, whatever speech or talk comes from anybody is ascribed to that personality and when it is out; it is heard by others, known and preserved by them as well there is the possibility of being read.

On the above basis, the speech of Allah to mankind, as a guidance through His Messengers, who heard it from Him either directly or through intermediary (Angel), is from Him. This revelation to the messengers is the same but perhaps with additional information on the previous one and in different wordings for a new messenger. Thus, the revelation to Prophet Musa which is known as *Taorah*; Prophet Isa known as *Injil*; Prophet Dawud known as *Zabur*; Prophet Ibrahim known as *Şuhuf* and Prophet Muhammad known as Quran, are all *Kalamullah* The Speech of Allah (Al-Ḥanafi, 2013). This speech of Allah will never come to an end as He speaks the way He wills to whom He wills and what He wills at different time. He will not cease to speak as it is this speech that will bring everything to an end and bring it back to another life.

One is struck by the assertion of the rationalists (Mu'tazilites) on al-Qur'an, the word of Allah. They asserted that it is created "*Makhlūq*". it is among the creatures of Allah.(Al-Qadi, 1965, hal. 527) The createdness of the Quran, as a theological doctrine under the Mu'tazilites concept of *Tawhid* and *'Adl* (Justice) (Al-Qadi, 1965) became necessary in the sect to establish the Unity of God in His essence and attributes by negating for Him all qualities, and most especially, the attribute of speech (*Kalam*) which then inspired this philosophical discussion of whether the glorious Quran is created or not?. This dogma started in the second century A.H. equivalent to Eighth century C.E. as a mere discussion⁷⁵ but later resulted into calamity, victimization and terrorism for the opponent of Mu'tazilism, who were majorly the *Muḥaddithun* (Traditionists) in the early third century A.H./ninth Century C.E (Nawas, 1996).

The Abbasid Caliph, al-Ma'mun, adopted this doctrinal position as a policy of the dynasty and declared it publicly for the masses in 212 A.H, /827C.E. He later, after six years of declaration, enforced it on the populace through questioning, especially, the scholars of *Hadith* in the year 218 A.H/833 C.E. (Rahim, 2001, hal. 199) which became known in the Islamic history as *al-Miḥnah* (The inquisition or affliction) (Scholars, 2013). The Mu'tazilites position on the Quran can be summed as follows: The Quran is literal, the Quran is not coeternal, with Allah's essence, the Quran is an entity (*Shay'un*) different from Allah, the Quran is created, invented and originated both orally and written, the Quran is not from Allah, the Quran is among the acts or actions of Allah (Zamakhsyari, 2012).

Besides, in the Ash'ari-Maturidi theological doctrines, the Quran is believed to be: Allah's speech both literally and contextually; it is from Allah – the Most High, without asking how; it is eternal; it is pre-existent; uncreated, uninvented and has no origin in time or brought into existence, it is subsisting in the essence of Allah without separation or division. The *Salafiyyah* movement supported the Ash'ari-Maturidi's position but it goes further to disagree with them in dividing Allah's speech (*Kalamullah*) into psychological or spiritual speech (*al-Kalam an-Nafsi*) and oral or verbal speech (*al-Kalam al-Lafzi*) (Al-Salafi, 1998).

Thus, the Ash'ari – Maturidi sects intended with their assertion that "The Quran is uncreated", the first division of *al-Kalam an-Nafsi*) while they believed that the recitation of the Quran (*al-Lafzi*) is created as it comes from the creatures (Al-Salafi, 1998). The Sufi movement's opinion on this is not

only in contrary to the Mu'tazilite's stand but also in consonance indirectly with the *Ahlu al-Sunnah* by viewing the question, according to Henry Corbin, as artificial and wrongly framed while Shaykh Abdul'l-Qadir al-Jilani explains that the word of Allah is not created (Corbin, 2013).

From the foregoing view points, it can be concluded that the assertions on the theological status of the Quran are five (5) in totalities: al-Quran is created, al-Quran, the Speech of Allah is uncreated, Al-Quran is uncreated – referring to psychological speech, al-Quran, is created-referring to the utterances of the Quran, al-Quran, is uncreated-referring to the speech of Allah in totality –in letters and meaning.

Thus, after a critical study of the issue, al-Imam al-Alusi, by virtue of his mammoth commentary, in his contribution to this discussion, has rejected the Mu'tazilite's as well as others' position of the createdness of the Quran and supported as well as advocated the adherence to the *Ahlu-s-Sunnah's* view of the Quran as an uncreated Allah's speech that is recited with the tongue; heard with the ears; preserved in the hearts and written in *Masyahif*.⁸⁵ Then, he refutes the use of QS. al-Zukhruf:3 as a proof for the createdness of the Quran on the basis that, the word "*Ja'ala*" which means "*Syayyara*" -i.e. to make or to turn into – is a transitive verb that takes two objects but when it means 'to create', it will only take on object (Alusi, 1997). Thus, the word "*Ja'ala*" in the below verses mean to make and not to create as it has two objects:

Ha Mim. By the manifest Book (this Quran). Verily, We have made it a Quran in Arabic that you may be able to understand. QS al-Zukhruf: 1-3.

The above quoted verses can be analyzed grammatically in support of al-Imam al-Alusi's exposition thus: the subject (*fa'il*) of the verb (*fi'l*) "made-*Ja'ala*" is We (*Naḥnu*- that is written in the Arabic version of the verse as *Na* because it is *Ḍamiru Muttasil*-pronoun) while the first object of the same verb is "it" referring to the Book and the second object is "Quran" and the word "Arabic" is an adjective qualifying the second object.

He then establishes another point based on the above verses on the uncreatedness of the utterances of the Quran (*al-Kalam al-Lafzi*) which differentiate the Ash'ari-Maturidi's theology among the *Ahlu al-Sunnah* from the *Salafi* theology. He says:

This verse (QS al-Zukhruf:3) has been used as an evidence eon the createdness of the Qur'an. This has been discussed at length but my response is if (the word – Ja'ala-) is implying the creation (of things), then

it does not indicate the creation of verbal speech (of the Quran). And there is no controversy in it (Alusi, 1997).

al-Imam al-Alusi then presents one of the evidences of the Ḥanabilah who contended against the Mu'tazilites on this issues. It is this Ḥanabilah's view that the proponents of Salafi theology uphold. Despite al-Imam al-Alusi's background and affiliation to Hanafi-Ash'ari schools of thought, he still upholds the Hambali's view which currently is the salafi's view on the createdness of the Quran.

The Concept of Intercession and its Means (*al-tawassul wal-Wasilah*)

al-Imam al-Alusi has, through his commentary on Q5:35 in his *Magnum Opus*, afforded his audience an insight into perhaps almost that had been said and available to him on intercession and its means (*al-tawassul wa al-wasilah*). In his own contribution, he has not only agreed with other *mufasssirun* that *al-wasilah* is the means of getting closer to Allah, the most exalted, through obedience acts and the avoidance of sins but also identified other meanings given to *al-wasilah* in the discussed Qur'anic verse which says:

O you who believe! Fear Allah and seek means (Wasilah) of nearness to Him and strive hard on His way that you may be successful. (QS. al-Maidah: 35).

He remarks, while relying on narrations, that *al-wasilah* in the above verse could also means; the need (*al-hajah*) and a special place in the paradise for the Prophet even though the latter is not obviously closed to the discussion. In other words, *al-wasilah* is the means to an end while *al-tawassul* is the use of *wasilah* to attain and achieve closeness to Allah or the favour of Allah in other to fulfill ones need. In his own submission, al-Ilori views it as closeness to Allah by mentioning His beloved in order to achieve one's demand or take away any fear or seeking blessing in his supplication to remove any difficulty. The author of the "Reliance of the Traveler" define it as "Supplicating Allah by means of an intermediary, whether it be a living person, dead person, a good deed or a name or attributes of Allah- the Most High" (Al-Misri, 1994). All the definitions given on *al-tawassul* made al-Imam al-Alusi to observe that the aforementioned verse has been taken as a legal proof by some people for the validity of calling for help from the righteous ones by making them intermediaries between them and Allah.

While some call on physically absent person or the deceased among the pious servants of Allah to achieve their desires thinking that it is part of the means to an end (*al-wasilah*). From al-Imam al-Alusi discussion on *al-tawassul*, it can be observed summarily that he has identified various forms of *al-tawassul* (Intercession); some of which are legally and evidently valid and some are evidently not only invalid but also forbidden unanimously among the theologians while some remain controversial. These are:

First, Al-tawassul through a living personality by requesting for his supplication. This does not mean the one being requested is better and virtuous than the one that makes the request. Such as the case of the Prophet requesting 'Umar to pray for him at *umrah* and the case of the Prophet demanding the Muslim 'ummah to supplicate Allah to grant him '*al-wasilah* etc. This is permissible evidently. *Second, Al-tawassul* through a deceased person by requesting the dead to supplicate for the seeker or intercede on his behalf. This is not only impermissible but also an innovation as it has not been reported the pious predecessors did it. It is an extremism of the highest order in seeking nearness to Allah.

Third, al-tawassul through the promise of Allah, out of His mercy and Majesty, to answer prayer and reward good deed, i.e. His ability to reward and answer prayer. Thus, both are regarded as part of His attributes of actions just like His act of overlooking and being pleased with someone are used as means (*wasilah*) in seeking refuge (*al-Isti'adhah*) as contained in Sahih Muslim and other books of *Hadith*. There is no dispute on the permissibility of this among the scholars. *Fourth, al-tawassul* through the seeker's good deed to achieve his desires. The legal validity of this is based on the *Hadith* that describes the actions of the three men who were trapped in a cave by a rock that blocked its entrance. Hence, they could not exit until they supplicated Allah through their good deed and they were relieved by Allah.

Fifth, al-tawassul through Allah's names and attributes. This is also permissible in consonance with Quranic verses and various prophetic supplications. *Sixth, al-tawassul* through the personality of a living person among the prophets, angels and saints. al-Imam al-Alusi presents the polemical views of the scholars on this in two divisions; those that disallowed it generally regardless of the rank and position of the person before Allah (including the Prophet) and those that disapproved it with the exception of the Prophet because he is the master of all the children of Adam.

He concludes in support of the *Salafiyyah's* theology that this kind of *al-tawassul* is not permissible as the early Muslims did not do it. And that the available evidences are in support of *al-tawassul* through the supplication of the Prophet and not his essence as in the *Hadith* of 'Uthman bin Hunayf recorded by Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah. The *Hadith* is authenticated by scholars of *Hadith* including Al-Albani.

Eighth, al-tawassul through the personality of the deceased among the prophets and the saints. This is not also permissible as it was not done by the *Salaf*. Had it been permissible, Umar bin al-Khaṭṭab would have done it directly instead of doing *tawassul* through the supplication of al-Abbas, uncle of the Prophet. The Companions made a distinction between the living and dead Prophet in this issue. *Ninth, al-tawassul* through the *Jahu* (Honour and Virtue) and the *Hurmah* (Sacredness and Sanctity) of the Prophet. This is different from *al-tawassul* through his essence (*Dhat*). al-Imam al-Alusi does not see anything wrong in this kind of *al-tawassul* if the meaning of *Jāhu* is taking to be an attribute among Allah's attributes such as Love of Allah for the Prophet. He affirms that this has not been reported from any of the companion perhaps because of their fear of being turned to another thing like *tawassul* through idols. He then remarks, despite this view of his, that there is no doubt in the fact that what Allah and His Prophet had explained and taught mankind and the Companions lived by it and became accepted by those that followed them is the most virtuous, all-encompassing, beneficial and acceptable.

Tenth, Al-tawassul through the *Jahu* of others than the Prophet. According to al-Imam al-Alusi, there is nothing wrong in this also provided it is obvious that the person has status before Allah. But, if it is not obviously known then it should not be used as *al-tawassul*. This because it is tantamount to claiming to know only what Allah knows. *Eleventh, Al-tawassul* by supplicating directly to the Saints and others both the living and the dead. al-Imam al-Alusi remarks that this is not among the permissible *tawassul* at all and it is better for the believer not to move closer to the sanctuary of Allah as this, according to some scholars, is nothing but *Shirk*-Polytheism.

Other important contributions of al-Imam al-Alusi to this theological discussions include the followings: *First*, His identification of the permissibility of visiting the graves generally and making *taslim* (greeting) on them only without requesting them for any need as the companions did not involve in that whenever they visited the Prophet's grave. *Second*, The legal

validity of praying at the *Rawdah* by facing the *Qiblah* and not the Prophet's grave as done by the pious predecessors. Thirth, the fulfillment of needs through *al-tawassul* by supplicating to other than Allah is nothing but mercy and favour in disguise as well as trails, tribulation and test from Allah.

Conclusion

Attempt has been made in this paper, so far, to present a résumé of the contributions of al-Imam al-Alusi to theological issues through critical study of his prolific commentary on the Glorious Quran. Theology has been discussed in this paper as a crucial theme in the study of *tafsir*, being the bedrock on which Islam is built generally and the reason behind the division of Muslims into different sects such as Kharijites, Mu'tazilites, Shi'ites, Ash'arites and Salafites. Attention was paid to the discussion on the name and attributes of Allah, Createdness of the Quran and the Concept of Intercession.

It can be revealed that his discussions on the issues cut across the views of the Islamic sects which show his vast erudition and the quality of his contributions to the issues under discussion. The findings revealed that the divergences on theological issues were due to the application of philosophy and logic in the interpretation of some Quranic verses. It became worst when it was done to defend sectarian doctrines. It has been discussed that the word Allah is not only an Arabic word but also a proper and non-derivative name of the Creator. Thus, it should not be used as loanword for any being lesser in status to Him. It can also be stated that all the sects believe in the existence and essence of Allah only that they differed in their understanding of His attributes, all in the name of avoiding "Plurality of the Necessary Existent – *Wājibu'l-Wujud*- i.e. Allah".

The Quran is the speech of Allah heard by the Prophet through Angel Jubril, taught to his companions, compiled in a book form for the Muslims to read. The doctrine of whether the Quran is created or not is not natural and original but artificial and philosophical as well as wrongly framed. Findings showed that it was cooked up to affirm the denial of Allah's attributes. It has been discussed that some *al-tawassul* are not only permissible but also legal such as through the supplication of the living pious believer, good deed etc., and some are not only impermissible but also forbidden such as seeking for the assistance of the dead, supplication directly to saints either living or dead, through the personality of the dead while some remain controversial such as through the *Jāh* (honour) of the Prophet and others than the Prophet etc. It is

observed that the wordings and contextual meanings of the *Hadith* on *al-tawassul* through the Prophet are the reasons for the scholastic polemics on its permissibility or otherwise.

In light of the above, this paper recommends that it is better to be cautious of philosophical discussion on Quranic verses relating to Islamic creeds. This will go a long way in having clear understanding of the issues. In the case of debatable issue, it is recommended that the scholars should let the Muslim populace be aware of their point of agreement and that of disagreement to maintaining peace and harmony. Thus, controversial issues should be reconsidered with a view to having a united as well as focused 'Ummah.

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