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ÖZET

Bu tebliğ, Mâtürîdî'nin kelâm ve tefsirinin arkaplanındaki kavramsal çerçeveyi ele almayı ve yeniden değerlendirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Bir başka ifadeyle onun hermönitik metodunun epistemolojik temelini ele almaktadır. *Kitâbü't-Tevhîd* ve *Te'vîlâtü'l-Kur'ân*'dan hareketle İmâm Mâtürîdî'nin, Mâtürîdîyye'ye mensup olmayan daha sonraki âlimlerin bilgi teorilerinin gelişiminde pek de bilinmeyen bir etkiye sahip olup olmadığını tartışmaya açmaktadır. Onun kelâm bilgi teorisindeki sem'akıl gibi kavramsal gelişmeler böyle bir etkiye sahip olmuştur.

Burada en dikkat çekici vasıta, haber-i mütevâtir veya tevâtürdür. Tevâtür ifadeleri daha sonraki kelâm ve hattâ usul-i fıkıh âlimleri tarafından olaylar hakkında sadece haber değil- bilgi aktarmak için kullanılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada İmâm Mâtürîdî'nin tevâtürü kullanımı konusundaki araştırmalarım, onun Kur'ân ve sünneti bilgi kaynağı olarak kullanması konusunda derinlemesine bilgi vermektedir. Mâtürîdî'nin tevâtüre yaklaşımı, kelâmî epistemoloji ve *Te'vîlâtü'l-Kur'ân* konusundaki çalışmaların kıtlığı dikkate alınarak aydınlatılmaya çalışılacak, ayrıca İmâm Mâtürîdî'nin bilgi teorisinin giriş mâhiyetinde de olsa- ortaya konulmasına çalışılacaktır.

THE VEHICLE OF TAWÂTUR IN AL-MÂTURİDÎ'S EPISTEMOLOGY

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SUMMARY

This paper will address and reevaluate the conceptual framework behind Imam al-Mâtürîdî's work in kalâm (theology) and Qur'anic exegesis: namely, the epistemological basis of his hermeneutic technique. I argue on the basis of *Kitâb al-Tawhîd* and pertinent discussions in *Ta'vîlât al-Qur'ân* that al-Mâtürîdî

had a generally unrecognized influence on the development of later non-Mâturîdî Muslim scholars' epistemologies, which stemmed from conceptual developments such as the vehicles of the sam'/'aql binary of his theory of kalâm knowledge.

One of the most notable vehicles of this binary is al-khabar al-mutawâtir, or tawâtur. Tawâtur statements are considered by later scholars of kalâm and even uşûl al-fiqh (legal theory) to impart knowledge of not just information about events that the statements describe, and so my investigation of al-Mâturîdî's treatment of tawâtur provides insight into how he deals with issues inherent in the use of the Qur'ân and Sunnah as bases of knowledge. Considering the relative dearth in scholarship on al-Mâturîdî's approach to tawâtur, his theological epistemology, and the Ta'wîlât al-Qur'ân, this paper aims to begin elucidating the issues inherent to these studies, while providing a coherent, if only prefatory, picture of al-Mâturîdî's theory of knowledge.

Introduction

Human beings quite naturally take knowledge for granted in their daily lives. We know where we live and work, we know our names. We also know events for which we are or were not present; for example, we know the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, whether or not we watch the sun follow its course; we know groups of people came to the continent now known as North America and set up colonies; we know there is in the world a city called Beijing although we may not have been there. Abû Manşûr al-Mâturîdî (d. 333 AH), the subject of our inquiry, knew God exists, that Muḥammad was His prophet, and that Muḥammad brought the message of the Qur'ân, even though he was not a witness to the events of Muḥammad's life. Al-Mâturîdî's religious knowledge, and that of his contemporary Muslim community for that matter, was predicated on events that none of them had personally experienced. How did they have this knowledge how did they know? Particularly in his works on the Qur'ân and Islamic theology topics that beg the question of how we know what we know - al-Mâturîdî deals with these epistemological issues.

The revelation of the Qur'ân occurred in time, and we gain knowledge of its revelation in time as well. The exegesis of a revelation in time, as well as the material connected to the exegesis, involves constructing a hermeneutical framework that can deal with material that conveys knowledge of the past event of revelation, and, in this case, the Prophet Muḥammad's lifetime. A dispositional quality associated

with such material is *tawātur*, a subject of study in the Islamic disciplines of *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and less so in *ḥadīth*. *Tawātur* literally means “recurrence,” or “succession at short intervals”¹¹⁴⁹ and *tawātur* reports (*al-akhbār al-mutawātir*) are considered to impart knowledge of the events that the reports describe. Because of these reports’ function in the conveyance of knowledge and of the difficulty scholars have in agreeing on the definition of a complex term such as *tawātur*, an investigation of al-Māturīdī’s treatment of *tawātur* provides insight into how he deals with issues inherent in the use of exegetical material, e.g. the Sunnah, as a source of knowledge. Moreover, it also permits us to better understand the Qur’ān and Sunnah as sources of knowledge in his work on *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

Very little has survived in the way of a cohesive *uṣūl al-fiqh* from al-Māturīdī. However, if we suppose that *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *kalām* share fundamental intellectual concerns,¹¹⁵⁰ we can similarly suppose that al-Māturīdī treats the concept of *tawātur* in *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* as he would in a work of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Furthermore, we can trace al-Māturīdī’s treatment and application of *tawātur* in a hermeneutical framework in his *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān*. Of particular concern is how al-Māturīdī employs *al-khabar al-mutawātir* in his exegesis of a text that is itself believed to have been transmitted as a *tawātur* report. Observing al-Māturīdī’s definition and treatment of *tawātur*, as well as its ramifications in an application such as Qur’ānic exegesis, allows us to begin evaluating his approach to the categories of knowledge attainable from the Qur’ān and Sunnah as sources of knowledge. The dispositional quality *tawātur* is our window to these categories in his epistemology.

Our inquiry begins with al-Māturīdī’s discussion of *akhbār* (reports) in the section on the sources of knowledge in *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. We then move to examine some of the principal occurrences of *khabar* and *al-khabar al-mutawātir* in *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān*, particularly in the case of the crucifixion of the prophet Jesus. Throughout, we will evaluate al-Māturīdī’s application of *tawātur* in light of his theoretical treatment and begin to construct an epistemological framework based on our findings. This will be particularly pertinent to our discussion of the echoes of al-Māturīdī’s theological epistemology in the works of later scholars.

1149 Bernard Weiss, “Knowledge of the Past: The Theory of *Tawātur* According to al-Ghazālī,” *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985): 86.

1150 The appearance of the term *tawātur* in both *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* literature leads us to believe there would be overlap in the treatment of the concept. Furthermore, Aron Zysow has demonstrated the theologizing of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in Transoxania al-Māturīdī’s time as well as subsequent generations; see Aron Zysow, “Mu’tazilism and Māturīdism in Ḥanafī Legal Theory,” in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, ed. Bernard Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 235-265.

Al-Akhbār

Sources of Knowledge

Al-Mâtūrîdî delineates three sources of knowledge: that which is perceived (al-'iyân), reports (al-akhbār), and speculation (al-naẓar).¹¹⁵¹ He divides reports into two types, although it is not clear until the end of the discussion that the two types are akhbār al-rusul (reports of the prophets) and al-khabar al-mutawātir (the recurrent report).¹¹⁵² Al-Mâtūrîdî explains the necessity of reports as a source of knowledge in that a man is ignorant of certain information without the assistance of reports; for example, he is ignorant of "his lineage, his name, his essence, the name of his substance, and the names of everything."¹¹⁵³ He asks rhetorically, "How is he to attain knowledge with what reaches him from that from which he was absent? Or when does he know what by which [exists] his means of life and sustenance? All of that reaches him by report."¹¹⁵⁴ He continues, arguing that a person who denies the necessity of reports as a source of knowledge cannot perceive the things that are not fully understood through mental exercise except by speaking them and listening to them.¹¹⁵⁵ He demonstrates the necessity through an argument with this unnamed opponent who denies reports as a source. Al-Mâtūrîdî reasons that the opponent, when he reverts back to his statement denying reports after being questioned on the subject, has accepted the report and only needs to be told it again.¹¹⁵⁶ Similarly, the opponent who denies the perceivable as a source of knowledge, when questioned and reverts back to his denial, knows the veracity of the perceivable as a source of knowledge but is confused. If he gives in, we are free to abuse him because he cannot react angrily or unreasonably. That would require the pronouncement of our action (e.g. explaining his perceived pain of being struck) which is communicated by report.¹¹⁵⁷

Al-Mâtūrîdî concludes this section of argumentation by stating that our ẓarurat al-'aql (irresistibility of reason) is what necessarily accepts knowledge from reports. He deals with the ẓarurah mechanism of conveying knowledge further in his treatment of the akhbār al-rusul, which similarly must be accepted by the irresistibility of reason. However, the reason for their immediate acceptance

1151 Abū Maṣṣūr al-Mâtūrîdî, *Kitāb al-Tawḥîd*, ed. Bekir Topaloğlu and Muhammed Aruçi (Istanbul: İrşad Kitap Yayın Dağıtım, 2007), 69.

1152 *Kitāb al-Tawḥîd*, 70-71.

1153 *Kitāb al-Tawḥîd*, 70.

1154 Ibid. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

1155 *Kitāb al-Tawḥîd*, 71.

1156 Ibid.

1157 Ibid.

is the clarifying signs that accompany the prophets in order to establish their veracity (şidq). No report is more obviously true than the reports of the prophets, and no report more readily assures the heart of its audience and confuses more the opponent who is struck by the irresistibility of the knowledge from such a report.¹¹⁵⁸ The second type of khabar, however, which he does not classify but which the editor refers to as al-khabar al-mutawātir, requires naẓar, or speculation, because it does not bear any evidence of veracity or proof of immunity from error.¹¹⁵⁹

The point of differentiation is the manner in which the veracity of the statement is made evident. The divine proof of the prophets' prophethood that accompanies them is the instrument by which the khabar is introduced to the human 'aql upon hearing and triggers the ɗarūrat al-'aql to accept the khabar as true as well as to accept the knowledge contained therein. However, in the case of al-khabar al-mutawātir, the veracity of the transmitters is not verified by any such proofs. Al-Māturīdī explains:

If the like of [this report] is from among those that bear no falsehood at all, then the person to whom it is ascribed [i.e., the initial testifier] must have born the duty of witnessing the speech act from one whose immunity from error has been made evident by a proof. That is the description of al-khabar al-mutawātir: the reason being that any one of them [i.e., the transmitters] even if there is no evidence of his immunity from error the report from them, if it reaches that limit, its veracity manifests, and the immunity from error of its like is established against falsehood even though the opposite of this is possible in every [way one can conceive of]. Such is what is said about that the path of which is ijtihād (independent legal reasoning) even if the error and mistake of each is possible on its own, they wouldn't agree except with whom helps them to that in order to make manifest its truth, since opinions do not point to it after the differentiation of desires and the variance of aims for the very one possessing the view without the divine help (luṭf) of the Mighty and the Praiseworthy who controls the manifestation of His Truth and His Creation's immunity from error as He wills.¹¹⁶⁰

From this passage, we can discern several characteristics, which in turn produce a set of conditions that define the quality of tawātur. Although at first it seems that only a person immune from error can initiate a tawātur report, al-Māturīdī elaborates that a person with no evidence to support their trustworthiness can initiate a report based on their witnessing a person immune from error

1158 Ibid.

1159 Ibid.

1160 *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 71-72.

making a statement, and that report will gain veracity through circulation and thus qualify as *tawâtur*. He indicates that there is a certain upper limit of transmission, a critical mass of instances of transmission and transmitters, which brings out the veracity of the report and demonstrates that it is *tawâtur*. The existence of such a report creates the possibility of a parallel situation for other reports of similar origin and transmission to be *tawâtur*.

Additionally, although the opposite situation is possible that a report becomes widespread and its *tawâtur* quality becomes apparent, but the report is a lie this would not happen in reality because the people would not agree on a report except with God's *luḡf*. God is involved in the process and controls the manifestation of His truth, which is in this case conveyed by the *tawâtur* report.

Thus, we can discern the following conditions for the *tawâtur* report:

1. The report must originate with a person who is immune from error making the statement (which becomes the report);
2. The person who relates the report of the statement from the one immune from error (the testifier) must physically witness the statement's pronouncement;
3. The report must reach a certain limit of transmission in order for its veracity to manifest;
4. Only a report supported by God's *luḡf* will manifest truth, and moreover, will manifest God's truth. His *luḡf* appears in the form of the immunity from error of the person making the statement, or the agreement of the masses on the transmission of a given report.

It appears that in al-Mâturîdî's schema all *tawâtur* reports begin from a statement made by someone who is immune from error. The veracity of the person making the statement must already be established before the report can be considered *tawâtur* unlike the transmitters of the report whose trustworthiness may not be established at the time of their transmitting the report, but upon the report becoming sufficiently widespread, becomes manifest. In other words, al-Mâturîdî does not permit a way to compensate for a lack of immunity from error of the person making the statement like he does for the transmitters.

It becomes clear in the following section on the final division of *akhbâr*, what the editor calls *khâbar al-wâḡid* (singular report), that the person who is immune from error is a prophet (*nabî al-raḡmah*), and that reports not based on the state-

ment of a person who is immune from error are admitted in al-Māturīdī's schema.¹¹⁶¹ While we may have surmised from al-Māturīdī's discussion of akhbār that those immune from error are prophets, the theoretical possibility that God could bestow immunity from error on whom He pleases existed until al-Māturīdī provided this clarification. Therefore, it may be appropriate to categorize the akhbār of al-Māturīdī into the prophetic and non-prophetic, in terms of the origins of the statements that become reports, and within the prophetic reports into reports transmitted by prophets and those transmitted by people who have no immunity from error. The akhbār al-rusul are those prophetic reports transmitted by prophets, and al-khabar al-mutawātir is a report of a statement made by a prophet, transmitted by people who are not immune from error.

Furthermore, we find from al-Māturīdī's discussion of khabar al-wāḥid in comparison to al-khabar al-mutawātir that the latter obligates knowledge.¹¹⁶² Al-khabar al-mutawātir, therefore, must impose upon the human ḍarūrat al-'aql in a manner similar to that of the akhbār al-rusul, obligating knowledge to obtain in the audience. Tawātur is in this sense a dispositional quality, allowing for the obtainment of knowledge upon the occurrence of the appropriate circumstances (the four conditions listed above). However, the type of knowledge imparted is in its origin from prophets and inevitably is primarily religious knowledge. It is possible that prophets made statements regarding historical phenomena, or observations of society. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that al-Māturīdī allows for only reports originating in a strictly religious context to obligate knowledge, whereas reports from people other than prophets, regardless of the subject matter, must be worked on in order to determine their qualities. Al-Māturīdī requires that the transmission of such non-prophetic statements be scrutinized through *ijtihād* and *nazar* in order to determine whether they are valid or should be omitted. However, whether they are useful or not, these reports do not give humans recourse to full knowledge on their basis.¹¹⁶³

Application in Refutation: al-Warrāq and Ibn al-Rawandī

In his discussion of Ibn al-Rawandī's (d. 298 AH) writing on al-Warrāq (d. 247 AH), al-Māturīdī applies his understanding of tawātur to a refutation of the assertion that the transmission of the Qur'ān is a khabar al-āḥad (a synonym for

1161 *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 72.

1162 *Ibid.*

1163 *Ibid.*

khavar al-wāḥid).¹¹⁶⁴ Al-Māturīdī's refutation provides more detail on the process and character of the transmission of a tawātur report, arguing that the Qur'ān was transmitted "successively sufficiently," indicating with the doublet kāfatan 'an kāfatin that successive sufficient numbers of transmitters transmitted the Qur'ān through the generations.¹¹⁶⁵ Thus, we can define the limit of transmission in the third condition of tawātur: that a report must be transmitted successively by a sufficient number of people at each level of transmission in order for its veracity to manifest.

Al-Māturīdī also describes how al-Warrāq "calumniates" the quality of tawātur itself by arguing that the transmitters of a tawātur statement are likely to make mistakes in their transmission if they are far from the source of the statement in time and place, and that if they are close, "the practice of [tawātur] is not possible except for a short duration."¹¹⁶⁶ Al-Māturīdī responds citing Ibn al-Rawandī's reply that al-Warrāq is ignorant of the gatherings of scholars presumably where the reports would be shared and transmitted and through them, the wide distribution of reports to the point that very little is unknown by those further away, almost preferentially in comparison to those closer to the source of the original report.¹¹⁶⁷

In his own refutation of al-Warrāq, al-Māturīdī likens the tawātur transmission of reports from the prophets to reports of the Muslim conquests and the death and victories of kings. In particular, he explains that a report of such grave importance as the murder of a king would be disseminated by ḍarūrah meaning, with such irresistibility to human reason that no one would deny it until, even if the people were to want to hide it, they would not be able to do so.¹¹⁶⁸ Likewise, reports of a nature beyond normal circumstances, such as the coming of a prophet, become widespread in areas of the world far removed from the original location of the report. Al-Māturīdī argues this was the case of the Prophet Muḥammad, whose reports are so well distributed that one cannot go to a distant corner of the world without finding evidence of his reports there.¹¹⁶⁹ Reports of this type do not dissipate easily, so the likelihood that they were transmitted by a single, weak chain of transmitters (as opposed to a sufficient, critical mass of transmitters at each level of transmission) is very low.

1164 *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 270.

1165 *Ibid.*

1166 *Ibid.*

1167 *Ibid.*

1168 *Ibid.*

1169 *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, 271.

Al-Māturīdī's refutation of al-Warrāq reveals more about the character of the original statement of the report, the circumstances surrounding its pronouncement, and the knowledge it contains. Tawātur reports, it seems, have their origins not only in the statements of prophets (the first condition of tawātur), but their being prophetic statements itself makes them irresistible to transmission. This notion is similar to the irresistibility of akhbār al-rusul for human reason; however, in this case al-Māturīdī intends not just the conveyance of knowledge from these reports, but their transmission over time and space as well. The conveyance of knowledge is part of the transmission, but the repetition of the transmission that is, the fact that it continues over time and space applies the irresistibility of these reports in a further context. It is not just the source of the reports (statements of prophets) that obligates knowledge in the audience, but also the category of knowledge contained therein and transmitted that obligates its obtainment in the audience. This supports the fourth condition of tawātur that only a statement supported by God's luṭf will manifest truth and therefore, knowledge for the audience. The truth bestowed on the statement from God through divine communication with the prophet gives the report of the statement the irresistibility characteristic of tawātur reports. Transmitters other than the prophet do not experience the divine communication of knowledge, but they are subject to the ḍarūrah. Thus, we may conclude that the knowledge transmitted in tawātur reports is ḍarūrī irresistible, immediate, and passively acquired.

Akhbār in al-Māturīdī's exegesis

The Mutawātir Quality of a Khabar al-Āḥād

In his discussion of Q 2:180 in *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān* and the associated legal issue of whether a person can specify an heir for any part of his/her estate, al-Māturīdī treats the arguments for the abrogation of the verse by a prophetic report. The verse appears to establish that a person may designate heirs, but the prophetic report prohibits this. He explains that there are two views on the matter, one of which is that the prophetic report is khabar al-āḥād, a report that cannot abrogate other reports let alone a verse of the Qur'ān.¹¹⁷⁰ According to al-Māturīdī, the group professing this opinion argues that in terms of transmission, the report is āḥād, whereas in terms of the knowledge of its validity, it is mutawātir. Al-Māturīdī agrees that this is a possibility, because it happens that a mutawātir report will be known by one generation, but only its associated action will be known by the

1170 Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ahmet Vanlıoğlu and Bekir Topaloğlu (Istanbul: Mizan Yayınevi, 2005), 1:333.

following generation.¹¹⁷¹ The report itself may be considered *āḥād* thereafter, but the resulting practice is so widespread and agreed upon that it is *mutawātir*. He cites the case of the prophetic report prohibiting the flesh of predatory beasts and birds with talons, which is *āḥād* in its transmission but *mutawātir* in its observance and people's knowledge of its validity, as an example of this situation.¹¹⁷²

Al-Māturīdī herein provides another method for the conveyance of knowledge from a *mutawātir* report, as well as another evaluation of a concept's *tawātur* quality. We find that a concept may be *mutawātir* not strictly because of the character of its transmission as a report, but also because of the character of its enforcement. The *mutawātir* report forbidding the flesh of predatory beasts and birds with talons may have been circulating for some time, but by al-Māturīdī's generation, only the *mutawātir* enforcement of the prohibition existed. *Tawātur* applies, therefore, not only to statements made in the past, but also to actions resulting from statements made in the past. Furthermore, the knowledge obtained from the *mutawātir* report accompanies the *mutawātir* action once the report has lost its *tawātur* status. The knowledge is thus conveyed in the action, and is still *ḍarūrī* in that it is irresistibly and passively acquired. The widespread acceptance and enforcement of the action precludes the necessity for speculating as to its validity. Lastly, the source of the knowledge conveyed in the action is still the knowledge from the *mutawātir* report. Although the verbal report may have lost popularity, the knowledge originally obtained from the report itself does not transfer to a different source, or create a new source, upon the loss of the verbal aspect.

Tawātur in this instance plays an important part in the exegesis of the verse: Based on his evaluation of the possibility of an *āḥād* transmission, and a *mutawātir* enforcement, al-Māturīdī concludes that the verse is abrogated by the prophetic report.¹¹⁷³ We observe in this case that al-Māturīdī's understanding of the sources of religious knowledge, and their interaction in legal theory, affects his interpretation of the verse, as well as the report, on the legal level. Al-Māturīdī has an established hierarchy of religious knowledge in which an *āḥād* prophetic report can abrogate the legal effect of a *mutawātir* verse of the Qur'ān based on the *mutawātir* enforcement of the report's associated action. Thus, we may add to the third condition of *tawātur* that not only the successive, sufficient transmission of the report manifests the report's veracity, but also that the widespread enforcement of the report's associated action has the same effect.

1171 Ibid.

1172 *Ta'wīlat al-Qur'ān*, ed. Vanlioğlu/Topaloğlu, 1:333-334.

1173 *Ta'wīlat al-Qur'ān*, ed. Vanlioğlu/Topaloğlu, 1:334.

A Mutawātir Falsehood

Possibly the most dogmatically and theologically pertinent exegetical discussion of a khabar mutawātir is in Q 4:157-158: “They said, ‘Verily, we killed Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, the Messenger of God;’ but they did not kill him, nor crucify him, but it appeared [that way] to them. Certainly those who differ on it doubt it and have no knowledge of it except to follow suspicion; they certainly did not kill him / Rather, God raised him up to Him; God is Mighty, Wise.” Al-Māturīdī explains that some people hold two opinions on this verse. The first, the opinion of some of the “Sophists,” is that those referred to in the verse who believe they killed and crucified Jesus probably erred or were mistaken in their witnessing of the events.¹¹⁷⁴ The second opinion, of some of the Mu’talizah, is the possibility that the mutawātir report of these events was based on false or erroneous reports.¹¹⁷⁵ According to al-Māturīdī’s theoretical framework in Kitāb al-Tawḥīd, a mutawātir report is incapable of falsehood. Knowledge does not obtain falsely, nor can knowledge especially ḍarūrī knowledge created by God be false. The basis of the reports in falsehood would invalidate the possibility of the tawātūr quality for al-Māturīdī.

Al-Māturīdī’s Mu’talizī opponents do not present a strong argument, but ask rhetorically following the elaboration of the Sophists’ argument that the senses can err, “What prevents mutawātir reports from possibly emerging falsely and erroneously too?”¹¹⁷⁶ Al-Māturīdī responds quoting others explaining that the report of the murder of Jesus only spread among six or seven of those mentioned in the Qur’ānic narrative, which attains the level of a khabar āḥād. It appears that this is al-Māturīdī’s opinion on the matter, and because akhbār al-āḥād do not obligate knowledge in al-Māturīdī’s schema, this sufficiently dismisses the false tawātūr issue.¹¹⁷⁷

However, he continues to refute the Mu’talizī claim with an elaboration on the possibilities for deliberate human collusion to misinform others. Al-Māturīdī argues that those who entered the home searching for Jesus in order to kill him, once they realized they could find no trace of him, decided to claim they had killed him. They did not want to admit the greatness of the sign of his message

1174 *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān*, ed. Mehmet Boynukalın and Bekir Topaloğlu, 4:100-101.

1175 *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān*, ed. Boynukalın/Topaloğlu, 4:101.

1176 *Ta’wīlāt al-Qur’ān*, ed. Boynukalın/Topaloğlu, 4:102.

1177 Ibid; *wa al-khabar al-ladhī kān intishāruhu bi-dhālīka al-qadar min al-’adad huwa min akhbār al-āḥād ‘indanā*, “The report whose distribution by that amount in number, we consider it among the akhbār al-āḥād.”

inherent in his mysterious disappearance from the home.¹¹⁷⁸ Their report, therefore, was an obfuscation of the true report (tashbîh khabar) that they committed against others in their community.¹¹⁷⁹ If this is possible, then they did not mistake what they saw and their senses were in good working order (contrary to the Sophists' contention).¹¹⁸⁰

It is worth noting that al-Mâturîdî does not respond to his opponents' argument that this report spread among the Jews and Christians as a khabar mutawâtir by eliminating Jews and Christians as transmitters of mutawâtir reports. Instead, he addresses the people to whom the verse refers, who believed they killed Jesus, and assigns any falsehood to their collusion. This is significant because, although al-Mâturîdî had the opportunity to make al-khabar al-mutawâtir a report transmitted only by Muslims, he did not do so. Confessional identity is not a condition for a transmitter of a mutawâtir report; rather, al-Mâturîdî's emphasis is on the demonstrated veracity of the transmitters by sufficient distribution of the report. Al-Mâturîdî also confirms in this refutation that only a true report can obligate knowledge in its audience. If those who believed they had killed Jesus were telling the truth, or were correct in their belief, then knowledge would have occurred for the audience of that report. Instead, as Q 4:157 relates, the audience differs on it, doubts it, and has no certainty as to its truthfulness.

Conclusions

Following the process of transmission from start to finish, and bearing in mind the additions and alterations we made to al-Mâturîdî's theoretical framework on the basis of Ta'wîlât al-Qur'ân, the conditions of tawâtur are as follows:

1. The report must originate with a person who is immune from error making the statement (which becomes the report);
2. The person who relates the report of the statement from the one immune from error (the testifier) must physically witness the statement's pronouncement;
3. The report must reach a certain limit of transmission successive and sufficient distribution at every level of transmission - in order for its veracity to manifest; or, the report's associated action similarly must be sufficiently widespread in practice;

1178 Ibid.

1179 Ibid.

1180 Ibid.

4. Only a report supported by God's *luṭf* will manifest truth, and moreover, will manifest God's truth. His *luṭf* appears in the form of the immunity from error of the person making the statement, or the agreement of the masses on the transmission of a given report. His *luṭf* makes the report true by giving the knowledge imparted by the report a *ḍarūrī* character.

The proof of a report's *tawātur* quality is in the veracity that manifests as a result of these conditions. We cannot know a report's *tawātur* character until this veracity becomes evident. In this way, *tawātur* is particularly appropriate for discussions of knowledge of past events because it forces us to consider the entirety of the process of transmission and to deal retrospectively with such reports.

Just as the veracity of the report is the proof of its *tawātur* quality, its acceptance by the human *ḍarūrat al-'aql* is evidence that the character of the knowledge imparted by the report is *ḍarūrī*. Al-Māturīdī does not explicitly describe the knowledge imparted by the report in this way, but it is clear from his discussions that the knowledge is acquired passively and irresistibly by the audience. Similarly, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505 AH), writing on the mainstream Shāf'ī-Ash'arī view of *tawātur*, argues that not only is the report's basis in knowledge ('ilm) rather than opinion (*ẓann*) a condition of *tawātur*, but also that the knowledge must be *ḍarūrī*.¹¹⁸¹

This is a more nuanced understanding of the epistemological process outlined by al-Māturīdī. Although al-Māturīdī does not explicitly state that the report must be based on knowledge and not opinion, as we noted in his discussion of the report of Jesus' crucifixion, one of his explanations for the spread of the report is that a group obfuscated the true report. The report they circulated was based on a falsehood, and failed to manifest as *mutawātir*. Furthermore, al-Māturīdī's first condition is that the report be based on the statement of a person who is immune from error, and thus produces only true statements. Combining these notions that the false basis of a report will not lead to a *mutawātir* report, and that the original statement maker must be immune from error we can argue that the basis of al-Māturīdī's *tawātur* is knowledge and nothing less.

Moreover, both al-Māturīdī and al-Ghazālī contend that the knowledge imparted by al-khabar al-mutawātir is *ḍarūrī*. Al-Ghazālī explicitly states that this is the case, but we can surmise from al-Māturīdī's theoretical discussion that the knowledge must be *ḍarūrī*. For both, the knowledge must bear this characteristic

1181 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā min 'Ilm al-Uṣūl*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Şādir, 1970), 134. [Originally printed: (1322 AH) Būlāq: al-Maṭba'ah al-Amīriyyah]

in order to be transmitted as a *khavar mutawâtir*. *Āarūrî* for al-Ghazālî means that the report is based on knowledge perceived by the senses;¹¹⁸² similarly, al-Mâturîdî's second condition holds that an eyewitness of the original statement must make the report.

Al-Ghazālî and al-Mâturîdî also hold a similar condition on the manner of transmission of the *mutawâtir* report. In his mature work on *uṣûl al-fiqh*, al-Mustaṣfâ min 'Ilm al-Uṣûl, al-Ghazālî writes that the report must be transmitted by a *kâmil* (sufficient) number of transmitters, and must fulfill this and the aforementioned conditions at each stage of the transmission process.¹¹⁸³ Al-Mâturîdî writes that the report must be transmitted *kâfatan* 'an *kâfatin*, successively and sufficiently through the generations. Although his diction is ambiguous, it is plausible that al-Mâturîdî similarly imagines that all of the conditions of the *tawâtur* statement must hold throughout the process of transmission. Finally, al-Ghazālî and al-Mâturîdî both argue that God has a role in certifying the *tawâtur* quality of the report.¹¹⁸⁴

While it is not necessarily the case, we can argue from the abovementioned similarities that al-Ghazālî's treatment of *tawâtur* represents, in many ways, a nuanced development from that of al-Mâturîdî. Al-Ghazālî's explanations are more direct and specific as to what constitutes a condition of *tawâtur*. However, al-Ghazālî is vague as to what kind of knowledge is conveyed in a *khavar mutawâtir*. He is clear that the character of this knowledge is *Āarūrî*, irresistible to the audience, and based on the senses. Nevertheless, he does not tell us who is responsible for the original statement or event witnessed. Perhaps he was deliberately vague in order to construct a truly abstract theoretical framework, but it is intriguing that al-Mâturîdî takes the time to specify the origin of the statement that becomes the *mutawâtir* report, whereas al-Ghazālî neglects to do so in his comparatively lengthy treatment of *tawâtur*.

For al-Mâturîdî, the *mutawâtir* report is a source of knowledge because *tawâtur* guarantees the obtainment of knowledge in the audience upon the occurrence of certain conditions. In this way, *tawâtur* is a dispositional quality. Moreover, the *tawâtur* quality is influential in the hermeneutical approach to scripture, particularly in the application of scripture considered *akhbâr* as a source of knowledge for the law. It is noteworthy that the Islamic intellectual tradition gives

1182 Ibid.

1183 al-Ghazālî, 134-138; see also Weiss, 88-89.

1184 Al-Ghazālî, 134: "It was in the power of God Most Great to create for us knowledge through their report, even if it was on [the authority of] *ẓann*; but this is not God's habit."

testimony in the form of al-khabar al-mutawātir its due as a source of knowledge, and particularly that it oftentimes transcends religious boundaries of knowledge. In the case of al-Māturīdī, even though he specifies that the mutawātir report must originate from a prophetic statement, he does not allow confessional identity, or the limitation of the prophetic statements to Muḥammad, to enter his tawātūr framework. Al-Ghazālī demonstrates that later scholars, even of different legal and theological leanings, developed this tendency in al-Māturīdī's treatment and extracted the prophetic element from tawātūr.

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