

Abdul Halim Hasan and His Methodological Approach in *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*

Abdul Halim Hasan dan Metodologinya dalam *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*

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Abstract

Abdul Halim Hasan was a Malay exegetical writer of Indonesian origin. His work on Qur'anic exegesis or *tafsir*, transcended geographical boundaries and reached audiences around the Malay regions, especially Malaysia. The academic value of this particular *tafsir* is undeniably outstanding as an early twentieth century exegetical writing. This paper highlights Abdul Halim Hasan and his academic measures in the writing of *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*. Emphasis was given towards his biography and methodological contribution in *tafsir*. This qualitative study utilized deductive and inductive method to examine and discuss his *tafsir* as well as methodology. The result indicated that Abdul Halim Hasan implemented specific methodology in his *tafsir*, benefitting from his reference of the past scholars in this field.

Keywords: *Tafsir* methodology, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*, Abdul Halim Hasan, *Tiga Serangkai*, Indonesian exegesis, Malay Archipelago.

Abstrak

Abdul Halim Hasan merupakan ulama tafsir Melayu yang berasal dari Indonesia. Pengaruh tafsirnya melangkaui sempadan ke seluruh Nusantara terutamanya Malaysia. Nilai akademik bagi karya tafsirnya ini tidak dapat disangkal lagi sebagai sebuah tafsir berpengaruh awal kurun ke dua puluh. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk melihat latar belakang bagi pengarang tafsir ini, Haji Abdul Halim Hassan, dan karya akademiknya, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*. Fokus utama akan diberikan terhadap biografi penulis sumbangannya dari sudut metodologi dalam penafsiran al-Quran. Kajian ini adalah suatu kajian kualitatif yang akan menggunakan kaedah deduksi dan induksi, bagi mengkaji dan menyusun metodologi yang dipraktik oleh beliau dalam penulisan tafsirnya. Kajian mendapati beliau menggunakan kaedah khusus didalam penafsirannya yang diambil dari kefahamannya keatas penulisan tafsir oleh ulama-ulama terdahulunya,

Kata Kunci: Metodologi Tafsir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Karim, Abdul Halim Hasan, Tiga Serangkai, Ulama Tafsir Indonesian, Kepulauan Melayu Nusantara.

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Introduction

The Malay World was first introduced to the Islamic faith when Arab traders, who came directly from Arabia, and spread Islam's most essential principle that is the Oneness of God.¹ Through this encounter, the locals found a new religion and belief system that emphasizes on good conduct and virtues, prompting its further dissemination and embrace throughout the Malay Archipelago until today.

The essential teachings of Islam contained in the Qur'ān and Sunnah was eventually learnt, understood and accepted by new Muslims. This marked the initial process of translating the Qur'ān and Sunnah from Arabic to the Malay language so that Malay native speakers may better understand Islam.

The first written Malay work on the Qur'ān was by al-Singkili² in the seventeenth century, who exemplified on the interpretation of Jalālayn.³ Succeeding him were numerous Malay Muslim scholars who collectively endeavoured in producing Qur'anic exegesis (henceforth known as *tafsir*) in Malay language by either translating the Arabic language *tafsir* from the Middle East or directly interpreting Qur'ān verses with assistance from available Middle Eastern sources.

The dawn of the twentieth century marked the birth of numerous *tafsir* by Malay scholars. Their works exposed the spirit of Islamic unity under one pure 'aqīdah (belief) together with renewed understanding of Islamic practice and conduct. Notably, one of these works was *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* by Abdul Halim Hasan and his co-writers, Zainal Arifin Abbas and Abdul Rahim Haitami. In the Malay world, they were known as *Tiga Seragkai*.

¹ Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, (N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2004), p. 24-32.

² 'Abd al-Ra'uf bin Ali al-Fansuri al-Singkili (c. 1615-93) of Singkel, West Sumatra and his *tafsir Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*.

³ Riddell, Peter G., *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Responses*, (HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), p. 161.

Part One: The Biography of Abdul Halim Hasan

Haji Abdul Halim Hasan (15th May 1901- 15th November 1969) was born in Binjai to Haji Hasan, a preacher of Dawlay District and the great grandfather of the Manambing tribe of Mandailing, an area situated southwest of North Sumatra near the border of West Sumatra. It is currently known as the Directorate of Mandailing Natal with its capital Madina.⁴ Haji Hasan was a peasant of moderate means and a religious person who decided to send his son to learn basic Islamic knowledge at an early age. Abdul Halim first began his religious education in 1908, at the age of seven, under numerous religious teachers in Binjai.⁵

Among his teachers were prominent figures in religious study and active propagators of Islamic movements. Among these scholars were *ulama*' of Binjai they were Faqih Saidi Haris, Haji Abdullah Umar and Haji Muhammad Nur Ismail. He also learned from Syeikh Haji Muhammad Samah a *tariqat* or Sufi Leader in Binjai and Syeikh Hasan Ma'sum, the Grand Imām of the Kingdom of Deli at the time. He gained the influence of Islamic reformism from Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah who taught Abdul Halim between 1917 and 1950. During his journey for Hajj in 1926, Abdul Halim met with Syeikh Mukhtar Attarid and learned from the Syeikh in Mecca. Abdul Halim also pursued modern knowledge. He learned journalistic and politics from Jamaluddin Adinegoro in 1930 in Medan and took a lesson of English from Muhammad Ridwan in 1930.

During this period, the religious community of Binjai was heavily influenced by the Sufi order, or *tariqat* and debates on the oneness of God (*tawhīd* or *ilm kalām*). To honour his father's wish, Abdul Halim initially learned debates in the *tariqat*. However, due to his personal interest in *fiqh*, science and history, he later went to study under Kiyai Abdul Karim Amrullah.⁶ In 1920, Abdul Halim became an assistant teacher at Madrasah Jamī'atul Khairiyah in Binjai, whose name was changed to al-Madrasah al-'Arabiyah in 1927.⁷ Perhaps, his long acquaintance with the school – from 1920 to 1947 – imbued him with Modernist ideas and methods in teaching and writing. This school was founded by Abdul Karim Amrullah (commonly known as Haji Rasul), a prominent figure who introduced Reformism in Indonesia and also propagated for its emancipa-

⁴ Majelis Ulama Sumatera Utara, *Sejarah Ulama-Ulama Terkemuka di Sumatera Utara*, (Sumatera: Institut Agama Islam Negeri Al Jamiah, 1983), p. 253.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p.254. Abdul Karim Amrullah is the father of Indonesian prominent *mufassir* and reformist Hamka.

⁷ Ibid.

tion through the school syllabus and curriculum. As a student teacher, Abdul Halim was influenced by the school's philosophy and concept.

The biggest period of transition in education for Abdul Halim was in 1927, when he adopted a more dynamic approach in religious education, compared to the previously more conservative and traditional form of learning and teaching. This transition became an effective method to prevent private religious schools, or *pesantren*, from being labelled as "wild schools". During this time, Abdul Karim Amrullah, who was the Principal of Madrasah Khairiyah, together with the people of Kedai Panjang district appointed Abdul Halim as the new Principal of the school.⁸ With this leadership position, he authorized certain amendments to the school according to the condition and situation of the time. The political situation in Binjai escalated in 1947 due to the physical clashes between the Indonesian people and the Dutch colonizers. This forced Abdul Halim to migrate to Kota Raja (Kutaraja) where he resumed his teaching profession from 1947-to 1948). He then moved to Langsa where he taught from 1948 to 1950 and also established an elementary school. He eventually returned to teach in Binjai and its surrounding areas as well as across various cities of North Sumatra until he passed away in 1969.⁹

Abdul Halim's contributions mostly involved his spirited efforts towards building schools and social work. Among his contributions was the establishment of Al-Madrasah al-'Arabiyah (The Arabic School) as much as he also contributed to the establishment of additional classes in the 'Arabiyah School in 1937. He was also responsible for the establishment of the Islamic High School in Langsa in 1947.¹⁰

Abdul Halim's works encompassed different areas of studies. The tafsir currently studied was considered his *magnum opus* which still exists to this day. *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* was co-authored with his students Zainal Arifin Abbas and Abdul Rahim Haitami. Abdul Halim wrote on other different topics such as ethics and good conduct in *Bingkisan Adab dan Hikmah* and history of Islamic jurisprudence in *Sejarah Fiqh*. He also wrote on women in Islam in *Wanita dan Islam*; on the wisdom of fasting *Hikmah Puasa*; on the Night of Decree in *Lailatul Qadar*; rituals of cleansing the demised in *Cara Memandikan Mayat*; polygamy in Islam in *Poligami Dalam Islam* and *Tafsir al-Ahkam* (Legal Exegesis). His writing on history includes *Tarikh Tamadun Islam* (The History of

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p.256.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.257.

Islamic Civilization), *Sejarah Literatur Islam* (The History of Islamic Literature), *Sejarah Kejadian Syara'* (The Emergence of Islamic Law), *Tarikh Abi Hasan Ash'ary* (The Biography of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī).

Abdul Halim adhered to the faith and belief of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, as clearly observed in his works.¹¹ He passed away at the age of sixty-eight from a stroke and buried at Limau Sundai Village.¹²

Part Two: Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Karim

Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim was first written in 1937 at Madrasah 'Arabiyah, situated within the compound of Masjid Raya in Binjai, North Sumatra, Indonesia.¹³ The initial idea of writing a book of *tafsīr* was made by Abdul Halim Hasan. He later assigned two of his students Zainal Arifin Abbas and Abdul Rahim Haitami to draft the writing based on available sources. Majlis Ulama of North Sumatra noted that Zainal Arifin and Abdul Rahim were both students of Abdul Halim Hasan when the latter was the principal of Madrasah 'Arabiyah Binjai. They soon became teachers at the Madrasah.¹⁴ As teacher and student-turned-colleagues, they co-authored *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* with shared knowledge and understanding.

Significance of Writing *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*

Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim was written during an era of early development and progress when there was a need to educate growing Muslim society on the Quran, its basic background and, most importantly, its content. By doing so, Abdul Halim hoped to encourage Qur'ānic studies within the Malay Muslim society against the challenges of modernism and adoption of Western education and culture due to colonization.

Changes and transformations of the Muslim of Indonesia due to socio-political circumstances following the colonial ruling of the Dutch and later the Japanese occupation was another reason for the writing of *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*. This was confirmed by Abdul Halim in the introductory section when he described these transitions as being ideological in nature. During this period, the struggle for an independent identity for the Indonesian people was in progress after long-established colonialism over the country. Freedom of religion became the prevailing

¹¹ Ibid., p.x-1, 71.

¹² Majelis Ulama Sumatera Utara, p.260.

¹³ Ibid., p.256.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.255-256.

idea of the above writers. The reform movement, which found its pace during this period, also fit the context for such meaning.¹⁵

Muslim societies in both Indonesia and Malaysia continuously sought to increase their knowledge of the Quran through Malay *tafsir*. The majority of Muslims in the Malay Archipelago highly depended on Malay-language interpretations of the Quran to further gain insight on its religious meaning and content. The Arabic language indeed was and still a language understood by a learned minority. Therefore, Abdul Halim set to accomplish the challenge of writing a Malay-language exegesis for those who did not comprehend Arabic. He hoped that this effort will create the betterment of Islamic understanding and practice by the majority of Muslims in the Malaya and Indonesia.¹⁶

Features of *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* Exposition of Introductory Chapter

One of the principal features of *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* is the introductory chapter, which describes in detail on the history of Qur'an, including but not limited to the history of revelation, its processes and means, the Makkan and Madinan periods, the scribing of the Qur'an and knowledge imperative in interpreting the Quran. This in-depth introduction provides readers with a general yet concise understanding on the origin and sanctity of the Qur'an throughout the ages. According to Federspiel, Abdul Halim's *tafsir* in this regard makes extensive use of the introductory chapter by carefully outlining and constructing it into various sections addressing the phases or topics of the study.¹⁷ The succinct yet comprehensive introduction is similar to a preparatory segment for readers to understand the background of the Qur'an before progressing into its content and analysis of its interpretation.

Presenting Chapter Summaries

In his analysis of the third generation of Indonesian literature on the Quran, Federspiel distinguishes certain elements found in the particu-

¹⁵ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim: Ambilan daripada Tafsir Syeikh Tantawi Jawhari, Muhammad Abduh, al-Tabari, al-Shawkani dan Lain-Lain*, (Penang: Persama Press, 1952-1953), p. x.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Howard M. Federspiel, *Popular Indonesian Literature of the Qur'an*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1994), p. 62.

lar era of *tafsīr* writing by three Indonesian scholars, namely Hamka, Shiddieqy and Abdul Halim Hasan. He observed that apart from emphasis on the introductory materials, these *tafāsīr* also show great concern on providing their readers with chapter summaries.¹⁸ These summaries are usually placed in the beginning of each chapter, right before their opening text, and they outline the themes, laws and major discussions contained in the chapter.¹⁹ The objective of these summaries is to highlight the important ideas and contents of each chapter to readers.

Combination of Analytical and Thematic Style

As a modern exegesis, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* combines analytical and thematic styles accordingly in its commentary. Generally, commentaries apply an analytical style in which when a particular discussion takes place, the theme is highlighted and further elaborated in a single topical style. In many cases, the thematic style includes the socio-historical circumstances of the *sharī'ah*.

Reviving the Spirit of Islamic Modernism

As a former student and colleague of Abdul Karim Amrullah, Abdul Halim Hasan inherited most of the former's ideas of reform and Islamic Modernism. Apparently, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* shows extensive citations taken from reformist exegeses such as al-Manār, al-Jawāhīr and al-Marāghī, among others. This approach of discussing issues is exemplary of the Modernists' method of addressing certain problems.

The Sources

The major sources of *Tafsīr al-Quran al-Karim* contain a mixture of both classical and modern *tafāsīr* dealing with variants of exegetical styles, from the linguistic value of the Qur'ān to sciences and Islamic law. Among the sources found mostly cited within the *tafsīr* were *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Hakīm al-Shahīr bi Tafsīr al-Manār* by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and *Tafsīr al-Jawāhīr* by Tantāwī Jawharī. Abdul Halim was also found to have cited from *Tafsīr Jāmi' al-Bayān* by al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr Gharrā'ib al-Qur'ān wa Raghā'ib al-Furqān* by al-Naysābūrī, *Tafsīr Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* by al-Bughwī, *Tafsīr Mafātīh al-Ghayb* by al-Rāzi, *Tafsīr Lubāb al-Ta'wīl* by al-Khāzin, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī* by Naṣiruddīn al-Bayḍāwī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* by

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.63.

Suyūṭī, *Tafsir Tanwīr al-Miqbās* by `Abū Ṭāhir bin Ya`qūb al-Fayruzbādī al-Syāfi`ī, *Tafsīr al-Irsyād al-`Aql al-Salīm* by Abū Sa`ūd Muhammad al-`Umarī. He also referred to *Tafsīr Faṭḥ al-Qadīr* by al-Shawkānī, *Tafsīr al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyah* by Sulaymān al-Jamal and *Al-Muṣḥaf al-Mufasssir* by Muhammad Farīd Wujdī a modern work on Qur`ān commentary. As for sources dealing with other areas of Islamic study, he referred to *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl* by al-Suyūṭī, *Iḥyā` `Ulūm al-Dīn* by al-Ghazālī, *Sīrah Ibn Hishām*, *Nayl al-Awṭār* by al-Shawkānī and the Six Canonical Books of Hadīth to assist him with interpretation of the Qur`ān.

Part Three: The Methodology Clarification of Difficult Terms

Abdul Halim took a great care in clarifying difficult terms throughout his commentary. He carefully chose words deserving of an individual translation and detailed explanation so that readers can comprehend the Qur`ānic verses for themselves. One such example is in the commentary of Verse 2 from *Sūrat al-Baqarah*:

This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who guard (against evil). (Quran, 2:2.)

Here, Abdul Halim deduced that the word “*taqwā*” derives from the word “*al-muttaqīn*” in the verse before explaining that *taqwā* means “fear which further means fearing Allah’s punishment by fulfilling His order and preventing all His prohibitions.”²⁰

Chapter Summary

In *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*, a surah is first introduced with an in-depth and extensive discussion of its contents before proceeding to its text. However, the discussion is concise; for instance, the entire *Sūrat al-Baqarah* is condensed into a short discussion. Abdul Halim adeptly organized this section into numbers of categories and provided detailed information within each category. *Sūrat al-Baqarah* itself contains discussions on the following²¹:

- i) Name of *sūrah* and its meaning
- ii) Place of revelation and summary of content
- iii) General call to Islam
- iv) Orders and obligations

²⁰ Abdul Halim Hasan et. al., *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*, Ch.1, p.36.

²¹ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.1, 21-35.

- v) Message to all Muslims
- vi) General guidelines of the *Shari'ah*
- vii) Divisions of the *sūrah*
- viii) Explanation of the divisions and their purpose

Beneath each heading are several points specified and elaborated and by the three exegetes. They utilized a numbered list to organize ideas into a practical visual framework for readers to better understand the entire content of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*.

Based on a closer examination of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*'s summary, it is clear that the exegetes referred to 'Abduh and Ṭantāwī in inferring their main points and elaboration. In this regard, Abdul Halim replicated the approach of 'Abduh in *Tafsīr al-Manār*, which began each *sūrah* with a lengthy discussions on the call to Islam (*da'wah*), Qur'ānic discourse (*khiṭāb*), methods (*qawā'id*) and Commands of Allah are presented.²² Meanwhile, Ṭantāwī elaborated on the multiple objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the *sūrah* in its introduction.²³ The summary for *Sūrat Ali 'Imrān* is similar to *al-Jawāhīr fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Ṭantāwī Jawhārī, which Abdul Halim presented in his *tafsīr* by dividing the main points into ten categories.²⁴ This was also done by Ṭantāwī in his introductory commentary of *Sūrat Ali Imrān*.²⁵

Relationship between Verses

The discussion of coherence between verses often takes place following its commentary as well as definition of terms whenever the condition necessitates. In most cases of presenting the discussion on coherence, Abdul Halim questioned, "Is there connection between this verse with the previous verse?" In the elucidation of Verse 102 from *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, he correlates the verse with its two preceding verses:

They followed what the devils used to recite in the reign of Sulaymān (Solomon); and it was not Sulaymān who became an infidel, but the devils did become infidels, teaching people magic, and what had been sent down to the two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt,...And, indeed, vile is the thing for which they sold themselves away. If only they knew! (Qur'ān, 2: 102.)

Would it always be that every time they enter into a pact, a group from among them should throw it aside? In fact, most of them do not believe

²² 'Abduh in Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* (1947M/1366H), v.1, 105-121.

²³ Ṭantāwī Jawhārī, *Tafsīr al-Jawāhīr*, (Egypt: Muṣafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1350H), v.1, 26-27.

²⁴ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.22, 280-285.

²⁵ Ṭantāwī, v.2, 2-4.

(100). And when a messenger from Allah came to them, confirming what was already with them, some from among the people of the Book threw the Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they did not know. (Qur'ān, 2: 100-101.)

Abdul Halim further wrote:

In order to get a clear meaning of the verse, it should relate to the two previous verses. Below, we indicate the relevance according to the explanation of al-Ustādh al-Ḥakīm Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī in his tafsīr: He said, “Allah Ta‘ālā said: As they disbelieved in the Angels, they also disbelieved the Prophets, they refused to believe in Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) and prefer not to favour Prophet ‘Īsā (as). And when they made a promise, they did not fulfil it and when promised, they were treacherous. They were influenced by myths and returned to the untrue stories by throwing out the right and true knowledge. They refused to understand the subtle science and believed in whatever was presented to them by Satan during the reign of Sulaymān (as). They said: “The greatness of Sulaymān is his magic, there is nothing in his knowledge but in making amulet and futility”. The truth is that Sulaymān was not an infidel and did not perform such action but the infidels were the Satan of Hārūt and Mārūt (according to a statement of them both as substitutes of the Satan) those who performed magic unto humans.²⁶

Abrogation (Naskh) in Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim

In the *tafsīr*, the exegetes clearly stated that they support the idea of abrogation (*naskh*) in the Qur'ān. Initially, they clarified the wisdom behind the ruling of *naskh* in the Qur'ān. In the elucidation of Verse 106 from *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, Allah (swt) says:

Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one Better than it or one equal to it. Do you not know that Allah is powerful Over everything (Qur'ān, 2: 106.)

The exegetes wrote:

Nāsikh and *mansūkh* many of which are found in the Qur'ān became a proof of superiority of Islam and further became evidence of the Qur'ān as revealed by Allah The All-Mighty. Do not assume *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* to be a defect and shame to the Book of Allah Ta‘ālā when it is a necessity with great benefit to the rulings for a new nation who had just received the teaching of the religion from Allah.²⁷

²⁶ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.6, 352-353. Taken from Ṭanṭāwī, v.1, 102.

²⁷ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.7, 396.

Based on the heading given on this topic, *nasikh dan mansukh*, meaning “on the matter of abrogation and the abrogated”, they have clear elaborated on the meaning of *nasakh*: “*Nasakh* in Arabic bears many meanings, there is the meaning of elimination and there is the meaning of changing and deflecting.” Therefore, the meaning of *nasakh* in this verse is to replace the existing ruling with another. One example is a ruling from Verse 3 of *Sūrat al-Nūr*:

A man who is fornicator does not (like to) marry but a woman who is a fornicator or a polytheist; and a woman who is a fornicator does not (like to) marry but a man who is a fornicator or a polytheist. And this (i.e. preferring to marry such spouses) has been prohibited for the believers. (Qur’ān, 24: 3.)

The above verse has been abrogated by Verse 32 from *Sūrat al-Nūr* as well:

Arrange the marriage of the spouseless among you, and the capable from among your bondmen and bondwomen. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His grace. Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing. (Qur’ān, 24: 32.)

The first verse is called *mansūkh* since its ruling has changed while the second verse is called *nāsikh* as it becomes the replacer. According to Imām al-Suyūṭī, in his book *al-Itqān*, “The *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* occurs in 21 places in the Qur’ān.”²⁸

Following this, the exegetes concluded that the ruling of abrogation is indeed from Allah (SWT) and not the invention of Muhammad as claimed by the Jews. In a brief explanation, they indicated that although the ‘*ulamā*’ disputed on the existence of *nasakh* in the Qur’ān and some simply concluded all that the related Qur’ānic verses are *muḥkamāt*, the *jumhūr* (majority of ‘*ulamā*’) remained loyal to the consensus of existence of abrogated verses. There still exist disputes among the *jumhūr* on the abrogation of five verses although they have reached a consensus on the remaining sixteen verses.

On the changing of the prayer direction (*qiblah*) revealed from Verses 149 to 150 in *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, Abdul Halim commented on the ruling of *nasakh* in the verses:

Verily, the changing of direction of qiblah was indeed an important event due to it being the first event with regard to nāsikh in Islamic history. Therefore, the order was repeated to strengthen it (the order of changing the qiblah).²⁹

²⁸ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.7, 398.

²⁹ Ibid., v.9, 541.

The verses are:

From wherever you set out, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Haram). That, indeed, is the truth from your Lord, and Allah is not unaware of what you do. And from wherever you set out, turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Haram), and (O Muslims), wherever you are, turn your faces in its direction, so that people should have no argument against you, except for those among them who are unjust, do not fear them, but fear Me, and so that I should perfect My blessings upon you, and that you may take the right path. (Qur'ān, 2: 149-150).

Narrative and Reasoning Interpretation

Abdul Halim adopted a proper method in utilizing the narrative interpretation of the *tafsīr* by mentioning the prime narrator. The *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) usually mentioned the chain of narrators (*sanad*) that was only overlooked in special circumstances. The exegetes mainly referred to al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Ya'qūb and Ibn Kathīr for narrative commentary.

An analysis of *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* proves that the implementation of the reasoning method by Abdul Halim is in compliance with the permissibility of *tafsīr* by reason. This signifies that the exegetes followed a proper method and fulfilled the required criteria when working with Qur'ānic commentary. The exegetes also exercised appropriateness when referencing other exegetes and writers and did not depend solely on their own opinions and views. They asserted, "It is good for us to mention that this *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān is not based on our mere opinion. Rather, we gather it from prominent books of *tafsīr* and other sources and books on religion."³⁰ Thus, although they sometimes used a single reference as their source, they also added several more citations to strengthen certain arguments.

Their citation also varies whereby it is either taken word-for-word directly or even as a general idea from the original Arabic reference. However, they practiced the former more often than the latter. Their commentary exposed the narrative and reasoning interpretations, either separately or jointly. When discussed together, they presented their interpretation of each exegete and discussed the differences of opinion between them. Mostly, they referred to the views of 'Abduh in *al-Manār* and Ṭantāwī in *al-Jawāhīr fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* on the issues and elucidation of verses. Additionally, they included numerous citations from al-

³⁰ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.1, 3.

Rāzī, al-Shawkānī and al-Bayḍāwī, depending on the topic and needs of the interpretation.

Overall, it is important to note that Abdul Halim and his co-exegetes complied with the requirements in providing narrative as well as reasoning interpretations in their commentary. Moreover, their opinions were highly substantiated by the views of prominent scholars in the field of Qur'ānic commentary, both classical and contemporary. This indicates that they mostly referred to previous exegetes when providing their own interpretations to avoid any misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Qur'ānic verses.

Example of a Narrative from the Prophet's (p.b.u.h) Ḥadīth

Abdul Halim presented a *ḥadīth* from the Prophet (p.b.u.h) to gain a clearer meaning of the phrases “*al-maghḍūbi ‘alayhim*” and “*al-dāllīn*” in Verse 7 of *Sūrat al-Fatihah*:

Not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray. (Qur'ān, 1: 7).

This *ḥadīth* was taken from *al-Futūḥāt al-Ilahiyyah* by Sulaymān al-Jamal and narrated and validated as a *Hadīth* by Ibn Ḥibbān, who wrote, “And the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said, “*innal maghḍūb ‘alayhim al-yahūd wa innaddāllīn an-naṣārā*”³¹, which means “Verily, those who have earned God's wrath are the Jews and those who have gone astray are the Christians.”³²

Example of a Narrative from the Companion (ra)

Abdul Halim elucidated on the ruling of divorce by giving the consensus of the Prophet's Companions (ra) and their Followers (rah). In doing so, the exegetes acquired the following narration from ‘*Kitāb Asrār*’ by Abū Zayd al-Dibashshī:

Indeed, these are the words of ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ūd, ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Umar, ‘Imrān bin Ḥusayn, Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘ārī, Abū Dardā’ and Ḥudhayfah and the word of famous Companions (ra) and they are all in a consensus that the release of *ṭalāq* in one speech is prohibited (*ḥarām*).³³

³¹ Ibn Ḥibbān, Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad al-Bustī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, (Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūṭ. Ed.), Bayrūt: Mu‘assasat al-Risālah, (1408H), vol.16, p.184, no.7206.

³² Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.1, 18.

³³ Ibid., v.16, 983.

Example of a Narrative from the Followers of the Companions (*Tābi'īn*)

Abdul Halim's reference of the narration of the *Tābi'īn* (Followers of the Companions) is apparent in the elucidation of Verse 186 from *Sūrat al-Baqarah*:

When My servants ask you about Me, then (tell them that) I am near. I respond to the call of one when he prays to Me; so they should respond to Me, and have faith in Me, so that they may be on the right path. (Qur'ān, 2: 186).

Commenting on this verse, Abdul Halim wrote: "According to Qatādah, the Companions used to ask the Prophet (p.b.u.h): "How do we pray to our God?" Then, this verse was revealed."³⁴

Example of Reasoning Interpretation

An example of taking by the gist meaning of the source is apparent in the interpretation of Verse 118 of *Sūrat Āli 'Imrān* on the forbiddance of taking a consultant or advisor among the non-believers:

O you who believe! Take not as (your) biṭānah (advisors, consultants, protectors, helpers, friends) those outside your religion (pagans, Jews, Christians, and hypocrites) since they will not fail to do their best to corrupt you. They desire to harm you severely. Hatred has already appeared from their mouths, but what their breasts conceal is far worse. Indeed We have made plain to you the ayāt (proofs, evidences, verses) if you understand. (Qur'ān, 3: 118).

Abdul Halim wrote:

So this is explained by *Syeikh al-Mufasssirīn* and prominent exegete (Ibn Jarīr) that the forbiddance is towards those who showed hostility towards Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h) and the believers with him. Those were the Jews who had an agreement which they betrayed later on such as Banī Naḍīr who intended to murder the Prophet while the Prophet trusted them due to their agreement of assisting the Prophet (p.b.u.h). The forbiddance is not general to all non-believers and the hypocrites.³⁵

³⁴ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.12, 745. Al-Ṭabarī, vol. 3, p. 483, no.2912.

³⁵ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.29, 140-141.

Thematic Style

The thematic style of interpretation involves an in-depth discussion of an issue or topic in question. *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* applies both thematic and analytical styles in its commentary.

Generally, an issue that is rooted in the Qur'ānic verses is discussed under a heading with definitions and meaning of related words, when required. The discussion is then entailed with evidences as well as arguments of both logical and narrative reasoning (*ma'qūl* and *manqūl*). Depending on the issue highlighted, the views and opinions of other relevant scholars from related and various disciplines are further sought such as exegetes, theologians, *fiqh* scholars, scientists, linguists and Sufis. Examples of themes discussed in the *tafsīr* are *shafā'ah* (intercession), *taqlīd* (blind following), *sihr* (black magic), *ḥajj* (pilgrimage), *ribā* (usury) and the Jews, among many others.

For example, *shafā'ah* is discussed at length by initially elaborating on its meaning using parables of the relationship between the sun and the environment, similar to the relationship between the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and the *ummah*. Abdul Halim wrote: "Let know – Allah shows you – that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) is like the shining sun as said by Allah (swt):

And as the one who calls (people) towards Allah with His permission, and as a luminous lamp. (Qur'ān, 33: 46).

The sun shines over all things and makes them dry, the sea, hills, forests, valleys, plants, trees, deserted earth and vegetative lands, each takes advantage from the sun according to their capability in accepting the energy ... This is the parable by which I meant to compare the position of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) with ordinary people... The Messengers (as) are the mediators to teach human beings and their responses differ in accepting the message of Allah (swt) as much as they also vary in following the Messengers (as) as their difference in responding and preparing to accept the teaching of the Messengers. Men are accountable to answer to their deeds by which the enquiry is based on the news brought by the Messengers."³⁶

Verse 69 from *Sūrat al-Zumar* proves the relationship between humans and their Messengers and also their fate in the Hereafter:

³⁶ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.3, 186.

And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord, and the book (of everyone's deeds) will be placed, and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought, and matters will be decided between them with justice, and they will not be wronged. (Qur'ān, 39: 69).

The following *aḥādīth* narrated by Abū Mūsā al-Ash'ārī was presented to the various responses of Man to the message of the Prophet (p.b.u.h):

The Prophet said, "The example of guidance and knowledge with which Allah has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil that absorbed rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. (And) another portion of it was hard and held the rain water and Allah benefited the people with it and they utilized it for drinking, making their animals drink from it and for irrigation of the land for cultivation. (And) a portion of it was barren which could neither hold the water nor bring forth vegetation (then that land gave no benefits). The first is the example of the person who comprehends Allah's religion and gets benefit (from the knowledge) which Allah has revealed through me (the Prophets and learns and then teaches others. The last example is that of a person who does not care for it and does not take Allah's guidance revealed through me (He is like that barren land).³⁷

Following the elaboration of the *ḥadīth* taken from Imām al-Nawawī (d.676H) on the three types of people and their ways of accepting the message of the Prophet (p.b.u.h),³⁸ Abdul Halim continued the discussion on *shafā'ah* by explaining its philosophical perspective: "Let know that *shafā'ah* consists of seed, tree and fruit. The seed is knowledge, the tree is deeds (*'amal*), and the fruit is acquiring security in the Hereafter."³⁹ He then further elaborated its meaning by presenting

³⁷ Al-Bukhārī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Muḥammad Zuhayr ibn Nāṣir. Ed.), (Bayrūt: Dār Tawq al-Najāh, 1422H), v.1, p.27, no.79; Al-Nasā'ī, Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad ibn Shua'yb, *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, (Ḥasan 'Abd al-Mun'im. Ed.), (Bayrūt: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1421H), v.5, p.359, no.5812.

³⁸ Al-Nawawī, Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn Sharaf, *Al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*, (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1392H) v.15, 47.

³⁹ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.3, 189.

*aḥadith*⁴⁰ and two Qur'ānic verses⁴¹ and concluded the discussion with a previous discussion taken from *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* by Ibn al-'Arabī.

The exegetes furthered the discussion on *shafā'ah* by initially indicating the arguments of al-Ghazālī in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Din*. Here, Abdul Halim explained the difference between “hoping”, “deceived” and “dreaming” and how Man confuses between these three conceptions in life. The exegetes clarified that “hoping” is achieved through proper effort in life that may lead to a good end while “dreaming” is wishful thinking but without proper behaviour that may lead to success or even achievement of a goal.⁴² They then stated: “And should the seed be planted on a hard soil situated in highland that water may not be despatched and the planter does nothing but hoping to harvest, then this is called “deceived”.”⁴³

The definition of *shafā'ah* was brought to light by highlighting its meaning according to different exegetes in their book of *tafsīr*. Abdul Halim wrote:

Imām Ibn Jarīr explained in his *tafsīr*: “Verily, the meaning of *shafā'ah* is ‘asking for wishes to be granted’. There are those who defined it as ‘even’. This is when the person asking for *shafā'ah* has someone to help him, in this sense he is uneven until he receives *shafā'ah*, then he becomes even.”⁴⁴

Moreover, stated in *Tafsīr al-Manār*:

Shafā'ah is known to many as the person who grants *shafā'ah* by bringing the one who receives the *shafā'ah* in either doing or letting go of something at his will – that is, it may not happen unless by leaving a verdict due to the wish of the person who grants the intercession (*shafā'ah*).⁴⁵

Abdul Halim further explained the meaning of “even” and “uneven” in length before finally concluding:

⁴⁰ Al-Bukhārī, v.1, p.17, no.44, Al-Bukhārī v.4, p.74, no.3073, Al-Bukhārī v.3, p.82, no.2227.

⁴¹ Q.17: 14, Q.99: 7-8.

⁴² Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.4, 193-195.

⁴³ Ibid., 193.

⁴⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, (1420H), v.1, 31, 32.

⁴⁵ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.4, 200. Taken from Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, (1990), v.1, 255.

By this, the lengthy discussion on an important issue of *shafā'ah* ends with the hope that the explanation will uplift our – the Muslims – spirit towards development and preparation to achieve happiness in the Hereafter. And our – the writers team – hope may this issue of *shafā'ah* brings intercession to all Muslims in general by the Will of Allah (swt).⁴⁶

In conclusion, Abdul Halim applied the thematic style of interpretation in the discussion of topics that were related to different disciplines and areas and needed further elaboration. Legal issues were mostly discussed using thematic style. In doing so, the exegetes mainly referred to contemporary *tafsīr* for further explanation of the issues. However, classical *tafsīr* were also examined for interpretation of words, disputes on legal rulings and also reasons for revelation. In applying the thematic style of interpretation, Abdul Halim followed a proper method by citing other exegetes, particularly the prominent ones, and they avoided from solely depending on their personal opinion. The proper method of interpretation is also apparent in their application of a combination of sources such as narrative, reasoning and logical arguments.

Conclusion

Tafsīr al-Quran al-Karim is a modern exegetical work by Malay Muslim scholars, namely Abdul Halim Hasan, Zainal Arifin Abbas and Abdul Rahim Haitami. This *tafsīr* called for a renewed understanding of Islam and its practice following the Dutch colonization and settlement for over three hundred years that caused mental and spiritual stagnation. This *tafsīr* was deliberately written in the Malay language to meet the needs of the modern Muslim societies in the Malay Archipelago in the twentieth century. Even though this *tafsīr* implemented modern methodology in its writing, such as combining analytical and thematic styles in its commentary, it still refers to the previous *tafāsīr* for references. The influences of Modernist ideas are apparent as it frequently cited the exegeses of Islamic Reformists such as al-Manār, al-Jawāhir and al-Marāghī. This *tafsīr* also clarified difficult terms and concisely summarized each chapter to suit the average readers and learners of the time. It relates the relationship between verses and explains concepts such as *naskh* to avoid confusion on some jurisdiction to their readers. This *tafsīr* also combines the

⁴⁶ Abdul Halim Hasan et al., (1952), v.4, 200.

traditional understanding and modern implementation of Islamic scholars and exegesis across different times as the basis for its methodology. It surely reflected the needs of Malay Muslims of that time, especially on the reformation of knowledge and the mind after enduring extended subjugation by the West while also filling the lack of modern *tafsīr* in the Malay world.

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